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*Cohan 1816*

THE  
INHABITANTS OF EARTH;  
OR,  
THE FOLLIES OF WOMAN.

A Novel.

---

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BY

ANTHONY FREDERICK HOLSTEIN,

AUTHOR OF

*SIR OWEN GLENDOWER; LOVE, MYSTERY, & MISERY; THE  
ASSASSIN OF ST. GLENROY; THE MISERIES  
OF AN HEIRESS, &c.*

---

Thou smiling queen of every writer's breast,  
Indulgent Fancy! from the fruitful banks  
Of Avon, whence thy rosy fingers cull  
Fresh flowers and dews to sprinkle on the turf  
Where Shakespeare lies, be present: and with thee  
Let Fiction come, upon her vagrant wings,  
Watt'ring ten thousand colours through the air,  
Which, by the glances of her magic eye,  
She blends and shifts at will, through countless forms,  
Her wild creation!

AKENSIDE.

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VOL. II.

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THE  
INHABITANTS OF EARTH.

---

CHAP. I.

What plaintive sobs thy filial spirit drew,  
What sorrow chok'd thy long and last adieu !

..... CAMPBELL.

Blest be the heart of sympathetic mould,  
Whatever form that gentle heart enfold,  
Whose generous fibres with fond terror shake,  
When keen affliction threatens to o'ertake  
Young artless beauty, as alarm'd she strays  
Thro' the strange windings of this mortal maze.

HAYLEY.

*The Sailor.*

W HOLLY occupied with reflecting on  
the little event of the preceding night,  
our heroine had entirely forgotten her

early engagement of the morning, with the young Portuguese; and it was not until informed by a servant of her actual arrival, according to appointment, that she recollected the necessity of bending her attention to a charitable purpose, rather than dwelling on that strangely sudden and unsolicited advice of lord Leslie, which, as bearing connexion with an object that her heart, however unwillingly, was compelled to acknowledge as its master, had become irresistibly a subject of interest and moment.

But as egotism is never a very pleasing recommendation to a tale, the reader will most probably be quite ready to accord pardon to the author, if he ventures to omit the little personal pronoun "*I*," and suffers a third person to speak, in the memoir of Agnes Dursley.

The extreme anguish, and distressing emotion of the young Portuguese, whenever her aunt had, in her last illness, exerted

erted herself to give to this favourite-niece those necessary directions for her government, on the threatened event of the death of her beloved protectress, had deferred Mrs. Dursley from entering as fully on the subject as she otherwise might have done; and she therefore thought it most advisable to impart to the confessor who attended her last illness, the plan she wished Agnes to adopt immediately on her decease.

Father Pedro, who was a liberal and enlightened man, of benevolent disposition and humane feelings, readily undertook the office delegated to him, of conveying to the orphaned niece the dying injunctions of Mrs. Dursley; and these were, that as soon as the frame of Agnes had recovered the first shock of the irreparable loss she would sustain, in the death of this truly maternal aunt, she should repair to England, and make herself known by the necessary credentials, as the niece of Mrs. Dursley, to Mr. Bagley, in whose hands

that lady had vested the small remnant of property which her unfortunate parents had contrived secretly to preserve from confiscation, as a slender support for their hapless daughter ; and this had been done at their express desire, Mrs. Dursley not having herself any personal knowledge of that gentleman, but whose character ranked highly, as a respectable English merchant. On the event of her demise, she therefore appointed him to receive the orphaned Agnes ; as from the once-extended hand of kindness of her father to him, while under some embarrassments in Portugal, she naturally conceived would afford some claim for protection and advice to the inexperienced girl, for the present ; while of the future she felt satisfied with her provision, by the letter she had consigned to her, to forward in another quarter.

Father Pedro had undertaken to secure, for the unfortunate Agnes, some respectable protection during the necessary removal to England. It was, however, nearly two months



months before Miss Dursley had sufficiently recovered the shock of the loss of her beloved relative, to interest herself about those worldly matters, which it was absolutely necessary should now claim her attention; and it was then father Pedro ventured to announce his discovery of an English family, who, at his request, would permit the poor orphan, and her humble friend Benedicta, to travel in their suite; and, as they were to quit the Spa in a few days, no time must be lost in arranging preparations for this event. Thus supported by the advice and admonition of the worthy ecclesiastic, Agnes Dursley consented to her removal from Germany, in pursuance of the dying wishes of her deceased aunt. The morning of departure at length arrived; and our orphan quitted her German seclusion, attended by the prayers, and even tears, of the venerable and pious father Pedro; while the faithful, however untutored, Benedicta, followed the fortunes of her young mistress.

The English family consisted of the earl and countess of Somerton, with their only daughter, lady Susan Edgecombe; they were accompanied by a young man, announced as Mr. Oswald, who, it was whispered, claimed the nearest relationship to his lordship. His person was fine, his manners prepossessing, and an enlarged as well as cultivated mind, rendered him both an entertaining and instructive companion. The haughty tone which the earl and countess assumed, whenever opportunity occurred for the observation of Agnes, effectually repressed any endeavour on her part to conciliate them; and over the sweet countenance of lady Susan was diffused a melancholy, which could not fail to interest; but as she alone appeared to be the object of general solicitude, our orphan ventured not to obtrude more than a monosyllable, and even that no further than politeness urged.

The third day after their commenced journey, they embarked on board a packet  
at

at the nearest sea-port; and the following morning, a mattrass having been laid upon deck, under an awning, for the fair Susan, whom preceding illness, and increased indisposition from sea-sickness, had hitherto prevented from quitting the cabin, she now ascended the stairs, leaning upon the arm of her father, and supported on the other side by Oswald, and had just reached her place of destination, when it was observed that the mattrass had been wrongly placed, and thereby exposed unnecessarily to a current of air.

A sailor, who had with folded arms surveyed the scene, now darted nimbly forward, and giving it a proper direction, hastily placed the pillow, and then leant forward, as if intending to assist the invalid.

She smiled her thanks; when, as if by involuntary movement, he caught her hand! The indignant earl turned suddenly towards him, while an air of proud resentment prevailed—"Fellow, learn your own

degree ; or at least uncover your head when you approach *my* daughter !” and without hesitation, knocked the hat from off his head.

Lady Susan screamed, and fell lifeless at his feet ; the sailor rushed forward in apparent agony, and caught her in his arms. A scene of confusion ensued ; the lady was torn from his grasp ; he hastily replaced his hat upon his head, and disappeared.

The next morning lady Susan Edgcombe was again visible ; and, at a moment when she was unobserved, whispered —“ Dear Miss Dursley, accept a brief communication, and most earnest request. Seek the ill-used sailor of yesterday ; with *your own hand* deliver him the small atonement for the treatment he has received which this paper contains ; and,” added she, deeply blushing, “ be careful that you are not discovered in the attempt to serve me. Pardon my abruptness, but I dread observation.”

Agnes

Agnes received the paper, which was folded in the form of a letter, and awaited her opportunity of executing the commission throughout the day in vain; the succeeding one, however, presented the sailor; but on her approach, he shrunk from his station, as if unwilling to be recognized. Our heroine, however, beckoned him nearer, and tendered the paper. He now advanced, and received it with a bow very unlike his rough-hewn mess-mates; and fixing upon her eyes of strong expression, inquired with evident interest after the health of Lady Susan Edgecombe.

The reply of Agnes was brief and confused, though she scarcely knew why, and she retreated from the deck covered with blushes, though she was not conscious of having erred.

Nothing further of an interesting nature occurred, until they reached their destined port of London. The family of the earl proceeded to St. James's-place; and Agnes,

accompanied by Mr. Oswald and Benedicta, repaired to lodgings previously engaged for her, a few hours before, by the former, in Weymouth-street, when he respectfully took his leave; and our two novices soon sought repose in the arms of sleep.

Early the next morning, Agnes ordered a chaise, and accompanied by her female companion, proceeded in it to the counting-house of Mr. Bagley, in Coleman-street; here she was received by a young man of gentlemanly manners, who announced himself entitled to that name.

With no inconsiderable emotion she heard intelligence of the death of her guardian, his father; but as this was accompanied by professions, on his part, of inclination and ability to supply his place, she became somewhat more reconciled to the event.

An offer of accommodation at his house followed; and feeling herself alarmed at the novelty of her situation, she gratefully  
accepted



accepted his invitation; and prepared the next day to accompany him to Richmond to dinner, as he had informed her there his family resided.

At four o'clock the carriage summoned her attendance. Benedicta ascended a hired chaise with their baggage, in trust, as Miss Dursley stepped into the other, with the son of her guardian. The death of his father was now again slightly reverted to; he received the letter addressed to him in silence, put it in his pocket, and changed the subject. The journey was soon performed; Richmond greeted their view, and a few minutes presented the stranger to Mrs. Bagley, a very pretty young woman of fashionable appearance; but she did not possess manners correspondent to her ideas of English elegance.

The merchant's wife viewed her with scrutinizing observation; and then, with a half smile, assured her husband, the description of his Portuguese friend had not exaggerated reality. Three children

B. G.

welcomed.

welcomed their father's return, while a kind of bashful timidity marked their manner. The lady appeared sometimes familiar and sociable—sometimes cold and distant. Agnes observed this uncertain treatment, and felt anxious for an opportunity to press her claims, and receive the money lodged in the hands of Mr. Bagley, and solicit his advice in obtaining some situation of respectability, as it did not appear that Mrs. Bagley would be acquiescent in her remaining, for a continuance of time, beneath her roof; nor, indeed, did she feel the smallest inclination so far to avail herself of his hospitable invitation.

Day after day, however, succeeded, and she felt inconceivable reluctance to broach the awkward theme, so wholly ignorant as she was of the manners and usages of society in England, or, indeed, in any country; having been from childhood reared in seclusion, far from the busy haunts of life.

A public



A public ball, a few miles distant, had, in the interim, been announced; and as this was indeed a novelty to the young recluse, her hostess pressed, with unusual earnestness, that she should accompany them. The spirits of Miss Dursley were not yet equal to such a scene; but as she saw a negative would not be well received, she determined to smother her own feelings, and acquiesce with a good grace in their resolution on her behalf.

The dress of Mrs. Bagley was very elegant, and her friend, Miss Walford, joined the party; but Mr. Bagley having declined attendance, under the plea of business, the ladies reached the ball-room unaccompanied. A few shillings freed their admission. The appearance of both room and company surprised Agnes; but soon concluding that the distance of the nobility from the commercial world was very distinct in the country of which she was now an inhabitant, she determined to extract some information from the scene

around her, as she had previously declared her resolution to be merely a spectator; to which, in defiance of solicitation, she strictly adhered.

The dancers had finished their first set, when two young men, of singular appearance, entered the room, and took their station so near, that to avoid overhearing their conversation was not in her power.

“Well, my lord,” exclaimed the first, “what say you to a ball at ——? food for mirth I promised you, and as here is an ample repast, your expectations will not be disappointed.”

“Variety, at all events,” replied his lordship, with a sarcastic smile; “and now for some rustic nymph to amuse the passing hour, make love to, and, in return, be entertained with all those pretty artifices, employed on such occasions to secure an important conquest——But behold! for here is one, whose sparkling eyes already tell me she marks me for her own.”

“And

“ And beside her,” continued the other, “ sits the sweetest Melpomene I ever beheld ! you are at full liberty to take your smiling Thalia, but do not encroach upon my right to her pensive companion.”

“ Agreed !” replied the first ; “ though, d—n it, St. Ledger, if my eyes had glanced a few paces further, I should have contested the point ; for the smiles of my intended fail of that power of attraction which beams from those of your sable goddess.”

The steward of the evening, at their request, accordingly introduced lord Creswell to Miss Walford, while sir Dennis St. Ledger was presented to Agnes, as a partner for the remainder of the evening. The former readily resigned her hand to his lordship, while the latter coldly declined the destined honour his companion wished to confer. In vain was she assailed with entreaties by the whole party ; she was firm to her resolve ; and when Miss Walford joined the set, sir Dennis, advantaging himself

himself of the recent introduction, took his seat beside her. She had soon occasion to be dissatisfied with her situation; her ears, unaccustomed to the gross flattery of a coxcomb of the present day, felt offended at the unqualified professions of admiration which flowed from the lips of her troublesome neighbour; to suppress which, she had in vain essayed her powers of reproof. At length, tormented almost to tears, from the yet weak and enervated tone of her spirits, she made a whispered appeal to Mrs. Bagley; that lady only smiled, and with blunt familiarity, begged she would not render herself ridiculous.

Thus unexpectedly rebuffed, she summoned a reinforcement of courage, and attempted something like conversation, in order to repel that licence her almost total silence had hitherto appeared to encourage. Her new companion looked surprised at her unexpected repartees, and she had soon the satisfaction to perceive they produced the desired effect.

They

They were now joined by the couple from the dance, and **were** proceeding to the tea-room, when Mrs. Bagley, approaching the partner of Miss Walsford, exclaimed in accents of reproach—"Surely, my lord, four years cannot have produced so perfect a metamorphosis, as entirely to have erased from your memory a former acquaintance?"

His lordship stepped hastily forward—"Ah, my old friend, Fanny Howard! this is unexpected indeed. Which way then has the wheel of fortune turned with you, since last we parted?" exclaimed his lordship, laughing.

"Hush!" continued the lady, "hush! there is no necessity for an host of inquirers: we are summoned to the tea-table; and, in the course of the evening, we may exchange communication."

Agnes heard with surprise the foregoing dialogue; she pondered on it and wondered again; but a consciousness of total ignorance of the world lulled her surmises,

mises, if she could be said to have actually entertained any ; and she, at length, set all at rest, by concluding that these were the usual habits of society in England.

At the close of the evening, the two gentlemen attended them to their carriage; and arriving at home, they separated for the night.

The next day, Agnes entreated half an hour's conversation with Mr. Bagley, in which she communicated the advice of her aunt, and requested his assistance, to make her future arrangements correspondent therewith.

Mr. Bagley hesitated, but at length said—“ My dear Miss Dursley, this is a subject I am, as yet, very unwilling to enter upon. I am not, at this moment, quite prepared for what might ensue; therefore, wave it for the present; and in a few days we will resume it, when I can command more time for its discussion.”

Agnes did not feel satisfied by this evasion; but, as no alternative remained;  
acquiescence



acquiescence was unavoidable. A fortnight had elapsed, when, as she sat one morning, enveloped in sad and gloomy reflection, a carriage drove to the door, and in a few minutes lord Creswell was announced. The fair orphan rose from her seat, in visible confusion; and saying she would herself inform Mrs. Bagley of his lordship's visit, abruptly quitted the room at an opposite door, without even waiting his reply.

The lady of the house obeyed the summons, while every feature was illumined by delight. In half an hour the carriage drove off, and Mrs. Bagley entered the room where Agnes sat, with three tickets in her hand for the theatre that evening—  
“Behold, my dear Miss Dursley, proofs of the attention of one of our fashionables. Lord Creswell has requested permission to accompany us to Covent-Garden this evening, and I have promised for both Miss Walford and yourself; while his  
lordship

lordship is to attend us, and I to be your chaperon."

"As Miss Walford joins your party, pray, my dear madam, excuse me. My appearance at the ball was so distressing to my feelings, that, I trust, you will not insist upon a similar sacrifice to-night. I know but very little of the customs of society; but as you request it, I conclude my present close mourning ought not be offered as an impediment. Yet my heart is ill at ease; to burthen others with my grief, is contrary to my wish; and an effort at chearfulness is so painful to myself, that I should fail in the attempt, if I were equal to the effort."

A burst of laughter from her auditor confounded her.

"And where upon earth, child, could you collect these antediluvian ideas? you had far better have remained in Germany or Portugal altogether, and have become a sister of the order of St. Jago! Here  
you



you are so perfectly gothic, that unless you immediately submit to a little of my tuition, you will absolutely alarm all my visitors."

Agnes felt the indelicacy of the appeal; but as she had determined that a few days should terminate her residence beneath the roof, she smothered those emotions to which it had given birth; and finding all hope of remaining at home done away, without incurring the extreme displeasure of Mrs. Bagley, she gave an unwilling assent to the engagement, and prepared for the play.

Mr. Bagley having pled business as an apology for his absence, they dined at an early hour; soon after which the carriage of lord Creswell was at the door, and in a few minutes Miss Walford joined the party.

Some little time conveyed them to London, and they soon after found themselves in the lobby of Covent-Garden. The glare of lights, the bustle of a theatre,  
the

the call for the box-keepers, the well-dressed mob thronging to and fro, with the incessant cry of "*bills of the play, sir,*" bewildered the ideas of our Portuguese; and leaning on the arm of their noble companion, she almost clung to it for protection.

As the play was a very popular one, the house was unusually crowded. The novelty of the scene, the grandeur and magnificence of all that met her unsophisticated senses, fascinated, entranced them! and the *entré* of one of our victorious commanders, with the loud enthusiastic greetings of honest John Bull, swelled her heart with emotions never felt before; and so wholly lost was she in objects off the stage, that she could scarcely believe she had reached the theatre for any other purpose than that she now enjoyed, until the fascinations of those able delineators of life, who trod its boards, insensibly fixed her entire attention to the scenic sphere, when royalty itself would have been superseded;

perseded ; and suspended reason left her under the influence of magic deception. So completely was she involved in the whimsical distresses of the plot, that she felt totally abstracted from every thing else, until the following words struck her ear : “ Do not speak so loud—we shall startle the little Portuguese ; and I promise you that is not my intention.

“ What says your old friend Fanny ? ” replied another voice, which she immediately recognized for that of sir Dennis St. Ledger.

“ Oh ! ” resumed the first, “ she has no hope herself, and I calculated upon her assistance ; so whether I shall succeed or not, is at present very doubtful—but see, the *tête-à-tête* is dissolved, and we shall be observed.”

Agnes, thus recalled to herself, gazed with astonishment around her. The two ladies of her party were standing, and apparently in deep conversation, in a low tone ; she turned an inquiring look at the gentlemen

gentlemen who sat behind her, as a remark addressed to her by one of them passed almost unheard. The bow of sir Dennis acknowledged their having met before; but vain were all the attempts made to open the sources of conversation; “the little Portuguese” *had* received alarm; she was absent, terrified, lost in amazement and conjecture! and soon feeling herself wholly unable to recover sufficient presence of mind for discourse, complained, by way of apology for inattention, of indisposition, and was again pestered with officious civility, *eau de luce*, lavender, and essence-boxes.

The now-tedious play was at length over; the curtain dropt, and the party reached Richmond at a late hour.

Upon entering her chamber, Agnes was startled at seeing Benedicta seated by the fire, in tears! She hurried to her, and in sympathetic tones inquired the cause.

“Why, my dear child, replied the good  
old

old woman, "I have this evening had a visit from the housekeeper of your late guardian; she was but a girl when I first knew her, nor did I even then know much of her; but she has given me hints that alarm me on your account. I have promised, however, not to communicate anything to you, until I have heard the whole, which I am to be made acquainted with to-morrow: and now that I see you safe here once more, I shall go to bed better satisfied; and when to-morrow comes, I will tell you all I can gain from Mrs. Bendon."

Agnes felt much alarmed at the preface to Benedicta's domestic tale; but as her word had been pledged to observe temporary silence, she would not indulge curiosity, by exerting her influence to induce a breach of its observance; and therefore, bidding her well-meaning friend good-night, she rested her head upon a sleepless pillow.

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## CHAP. II.

And yet, alas ! the real ills of life

Claim the full vigour of a mind prepar'd,

Prepar'd for patient, long, laborious strife,

Its guide Experience, and Truth its guard.

We fare on earth as other men have far'd ;

Were they successful ? let us not despair :

Was disappointment oft their sole reward ?

Yet shall this tale instruct, if it declare

How they have borne the load ourselves are doom'd to bear.

BEATTIE.

.....

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,

But in battalions.

SHAKESPEARE.

### *Dobson's Cottage.*

At an early hour she arose, and harrassed  
by uneasy reflection, the time passed hea-  
vily until summoned to breakfast ; but  
here



here each individual seemed sensible of unusual restraint. Unable to analyse the feelings of others, and unwilling to reveal her own, Agnes scarcely uttered a sentence during the meal, which was no sooner finished than Mr. Bagley, as was his usual custom, set off for town; but ere he left the room, she begged that he would devote the long-promised half-hour, for the communication of the plan marked out for her by her estimable aunt. With evident reluctance and hesitation, he named a late hour in the evening of that day; and, snatching his hat, quitted the house abruptly.

On entering the drawing-room in the course of the morning, she beheld Mrs. Bagley deeply engaged in perusing a large packet, containing several sheets of paper, one of which she held in her hand, while the others lay scattered upon the table; at her approach they were hastily gathered up, and placed in the bag of a work-table near her.

The conversation commenced with the entertainment of the last evening; and at length fixed, by Mrs. Bagley, upon the gentlemen who were with them, when Agnes became silent.

“Tell me, candidly, your opinion of lord Creswell?” cried the former, turning suddenly round, and fixing her eyes, with scrutinizing expression, upon the face of her companion.

“That he is bold, presuming, and very disagreeable—at least to me.”

“Indeed!” repeated the other, in a tone of evident displeasure; “upon my word, Miss Dursley, you are very laconic; but if you intend remaining in the world, this high and imperious language will not fit you for the society you will meet with there.”

“Pardon me, madam,” resumed Agnes, deeply blushing; “pardon my abrupt declaration; the question was unexpected, and my genuine feelings were clothed in appropriate language, without adverting  
to



to the impropriety of which I have been guilty, in speaking thus unceremoniously of your friends; but, unaccustomed to disguise, I had indeed forgotten I was no longer authorized to think aloud."

"Well, my dear, let us pass that over; but do not seriously tell me that you dislike your admirer, for such, I assure you, he is. It is true he dare not yet talk of marriage, for family connexions at present forbid it——Pardon me, I will not be interrupted; dismiss that eloquent blush of indignation, disperse the first angry frown I have ever seen upon your brow, and let your bright eyes resume their native softness. Be assured I do not mean to sanction improper advances, but the viscount has been very candid with me; he only asks to visit you, and wait the issue of time, in any event that may enable him to act consonant to his own wishes and views of happiness. This, I think, reasonable, very reasonable; and to this I have accorded my full acquiescence. 'The issue,'

Agnes, cannot be doubted ; he will become entangled ere he is aware, and *time* will, no doubt, so far operate in your favour, that you may confidently, ere long, propose a private marriage, which, having carried into effect, you may, whenever you please, assert your claims in society, and feeling no longer any fears for the future, publicly declare yourself the wife of lord Creswell ; as no remedy can be afforded, you must stem the torrent of his reproaches, which will, no doubt, be bitter enough ; but they will fail of effect, when you glance at the perspective in advance—view the glittering train—a coronet, ample fortune, box at the opera, beside—”

“ Stop, madam, stop ! if this be meant as a trial of my principles, I owe you no gratitude for the impression you have imbibed ; but if you have really sketched a plan for my pursuit, it is still more mortifying to my pride and self-love. I possess the means of obtaining all the comforts of  
life ;

life ; and if I had not, I have never been taught to submit to the legal degradation you have recommended."

" Upon my word, Miss Dursley, your theatric flight has carried you very far beyond my comprehension ! these notions are very sublime in conception, very brilliant in theory, but you will soon discover, that such figures of imagination will not pilot you with *éclat* through the shoals of life. To sum up the whole, you are certainly a very singular young woman, and as certainly very different from the companion I expected. In short, unless you alter very materially, you will be held in as complete terror by my fashionable visitors, as a *memento mori*, or a death's-head and cross-bones, introduced into my drawing-room !"

" I offer you, madam, many thanks for the hospitality you have extended towards me ; but, as Mr. Bagley has promised me the favour of half an hour's conversation this evening, my pecuniary matters will

probably be then arranged ; and I will not longer obtrude my gothic opinions in opposition to your more modern ones, or exclude from your board your more fashionable guests."

Mrs. Bagley smiled and bowed. Agnes, mortified and disconcerted at her manner, took up a newspaper which lay before her. The morning passed away tediously, and the return of Mr. Bagley but just preceded the dinner-bell.

Eight o'clock was the appointed hour, and at that time they both repaired to the drawing-room. The silence of several minutes was at length broken by Mr. Bagley ; in gentle and cautious terms, he conveyed the dreadful intelligence to the wretched Agnes, of the total loss of her fortune, by the unexpected failure of his father, from causes which no human foresight could have averted, his own deranged circumstances, in consequence thereof, and the premature death of the poor old man, who was unable to sustain

tain this heavy stroke of fate ! he sympathized in her distress, he offered a small sum for temporary aid, but candidly acknowledged his want of domestic influence, and his utter inability to afford her the means of subsistence for the future !

He might have talked for ever. The stunned senses of his almost petrified companion had refused to attend his narrative ; she gazed wildly round the room ; objects became indistinct—respiration was impeded ; she felt as if at the last gasp of life.

Mr. Bagley was deeply affected. He sustained her in his arms—" My dear Agnes, had Mrs. Dursley no other resources ?"

" Oh, my aunt ! my dear sainted protector !" burst from the trembling lips of Agnes. The recollection softened her feelings, and tears relieved her bursting heart.

Mr. Bagley did not interrupt the salu-

tary relief; and seeing her now perfectly restored, by their timely aid, to the full sense of her hapless condition, he summoned Benedicta, who assisted her to her chamber.

In the bosom of this humble but affectionate friend were all the griefs of our orphan poured; and when exhausted by a minute recital of her tale of woe, the sympathetic Benedicta commenced her promised communication. She briefly stated the *sudden* death of the elder Bagley, unable to resist the pressure of those misfortunes, which involved his son in yet greater embarrassment, as the active part of the business only had rested with him. After being duly announced in the bankrupt list, he had disposed of his house, and retaining in his service the faithful Bendon only, was upon the eve of quitting the kingdom, when an opposite neighbour, who had once kept a hotel, paid him a visit, and proposed a marriage with his daughter, on whom he offered to  
6 bestow .



bestow a very handsome fortune, as she had professed an attachment for Bagley. The latter, totally ignorant of the secret history annexed, required time for consideration ; and having accepted a dinner invitation, they separated. Howard, having retired from trade, had taken a ready-furnished house in Wimpole-street, and had placed at the head of it his daughter Fanny, the offspring of his bar-maid and himself. Having never married, and being master of considerable property, he had given her a shewy and expensive education, which had naturally engendered ideas beyond her station. The vulgarity of the good old Howard shocked her, and she left no means unessayed, that could enable her to form an advantageous connexion. Chance, at length, threw in her way the dissipated Creswell. Her person was handsome, her vanity extreme ; but not being so expert an angler as his lordship, she soon fell a victim to her own credulity ; and now, finding her matrimonial schemes

circumvented with her noble lover, and the remarks of the neighbourhood not too charitable, she wisely determined, ere her reputation was wholly lost, to cover her disgrace under the mantle of wedlock. Bagley presented the means; he was a ruined man, of very respectable connexions, of fair character, and good person; and having succeeded in prevailing upon him to settle the whole of her present fortune, and future expectations, upon herself unconditionally, they were married. "And then," continued Benedicta, "my friend, Mrs. Bendon, quitted their service; for she knew too much of Miss Howard, to be a welcome inmate at Mrs. Bagley's; and thus, my dear child, you see this is no resting-place for you."

"True, my good friend; but whither can I go? my means of independence are lost, and I am incapable of earning my livelihood. The removal, however, is unavoidable, and a small sum yet remains in my purse."

A neat



A neat lodging was procured ; and taking a civil leave of Mrs. Bagley, and a far more friendly one of her unfortunate husband, Agnes and Benedicta, the next day, took possession of it. Soon, however, was the peace of the poor girl assailed, by a very unlooked-for visit from lord Creswell, who, when refused admission, still pursued her by messages and letters, at once offensive to her pride and dignity. The landlady now hinted disapprobation, and the contents of the purse each day diminishing, left her no alternative but a less expensive home, and greater obscurity. At the end of three weeks, they were formally requested to quit the house ; and our hapless Portuguese, taking the arm of Benedicta, set out in search of another.

After wandering about the neighbourhood the whole day, without success, they returned home, fatigued and dispirited, to bed ; and, by the advice of their present landlady, the next day they set out to search in one direction, that part of the  
vicinity

vicinity of town near where they at present resided, under the impression of obtaining apartments more correspondent to the state of their finances; and within a mile of Brentford, a small house met their view; it was neat, although an air of poverty reigned around. At the door sat a woman knitting, and near her were two children at play. They inquired if she could direct them to a lodging, such as they described. She hesitated. She had lately lost a lodger who had been with her for years—his two rooms were vacant—but she doubted if her husband would suffer them to be again occupied—yet the ladies might walk in, and rest themselves.

Agnes thankfully accepted the offer, and being seated, Mrs. Dobson informed her, that their late lodger was the son of a gentleman of fortune, with whom she had once lived as a servant; but soon after she had quitted him, upon her marriage, he had the misfortune to discover, that this child, then an infant, was both deaf and dumb; and

and as she had always been very fond of him, he had been consigned to her care. That the father had purchased and given them the cottage they now lived in, and allowed them very handsomely for their attendance on his son ; but the poor boy had died a few months prior to the present period, and her husband being now engaged in other business, left a doubt upon her mind of his inclination to admit new inmates ; but Thomas should be consulted, and the issue communicated.

Thomas was acquiescent, upon certain conditions only ; but these conditions were, to our recluse, of no consequence ; though she could not resist a smile, when they were insisted upon as a preliminary to their negociation. The lady was upon no account to be out after ten o'clock at night—she was to admit no visitor whatever—and never to visit them but when invited.

There was no difficulty in acceding to  
the

the terms offered ; and the next day they entered upon their country lodgings.

Some weeks passed quietly on, save with poor Agnes, whose means of subsistence had nearly vanished, without any probability of a supply. Thomas, with his Sarah and their children, appeared a happy group ; and often did our poor harrassed Portuguese breathe a sigh, that she had not been born in a different station to that which she had hitherto held in society.

One morning that Agnes was on the point of quitting home for a walk, having just passed the threshold of the cottage door, she was startled by the appearance of lord Creswell's carriage ; on the barouche driving-seat she saw his lordship, and she thought his eyes were directed towards her : terrified at the idea of a rencontre, she ran into the room where Sarah sat at work, for protection ; but perceiving with dismay that it was completely overlooked by the road, she darted  
with

with velocity towards another door, which she was upon the point of throwing open, when Sarah, with bloodless cheeks, and a scream of horror, exclaimed—"Oh, stop! for God's sake stop, and do not enter that room!" while, springing from her chair, with every appearance of agony and terror, she placed herself before it, as if to guard the entrance—"No, no! you shall not enter that room, while I have life to prevent it!"

The astonished Agnes gazed in wild alarm; lord Creswell, her cause for concealment, all, all vanished, at the inexplicable conduct of her hostess, at her pallid trembling form!—"Heavens, Mrs. Dobson! what is the matter? what can have caused you this alarm? or what can that room contain, which you appear to feel so great a dread of having discovered?"

"Nothing, nothing—I assure you, nothing," faintly articulated the breathless Sarah, while her ashy lips, colourless cheeks, and panting bosom, yet proclaimed the  
the



the most alarming perturbation. Her agitation now appeared wholly to overcome her strength, and unable longer to support her trembling frame, she sunk almost fainting upon the floor !

The screams of Agnes soon brought Benedicta to her aid ; they supported the enfeebled Mrs. Dobson to a chair, where she, at length, gradually recovered her former placid appearance.

Extremely alarmed, as well as astonished at the unaccountable scene they had just witnessed, Agnes slowly reached her own chamber, and imparted both her terrors, and their origin, to the no less dismayed Benedicta. In vain did they attempt to form some elucidation of the extraordinary scene so lately passed. They were bewildered in conjecture ; and so far from being able to unravel the web of mystery in which all appeared wrapt, they only still more puzzled and perplexed themselves by the effort. The remainder of the day wore away in gloom, and apprehension

hension of they knew not what; they only felt certain that all was not right, and they dreaded, at one moment, to discover that clue, which the preceding had been employed to unravel. Night, at length, arrived; and Agnes, with the friend of her early infancy, her kind and respected Benedicta, retired to their humble beds, near enough to each other to afford, in their eyes, a sort of mutual protection.



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### CHAP. III.

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,  
Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd.

SHAKESPEARE.

.....

For to her cheek in fev'rish flood,  
One instant rush'd the throbbing blood ;  
Then ebbing back with sudden sway,  
Left its domain as wan as clay.      LADY OF THE LAKE.

#### *Deeds of Darkness.*

THE fears of Agnes thus awakened, she became very observant of the movements of the inhabitants of the cottage ; but nothing occurred that could further strengthen or increase them. Benedicta had, in the interim, assisted her in completing  
some

some ornamental work, the knowledge of which they had both acquired abroad, and which was at once tasteful, and, in England, carried the further recommendation of novelty. From the sale of this, Agnes hoped to raise a temporary supply, as her last five-pound note had already been broken in upon. Their task was, at length, finished, and Benedicta, in buoyant spirits, repaired to town, to offer it for sale at some of the public repositories. Most anxiously was her return expected through each successive hour of the day—but Benedicta appeared not ! The fears of our orphan, as evening approached, became intolerable. The simplicity and ignorance of her messenger occurred to her disturbed imagination ; her limited knowledge of the language of the country, her credulity, and long seclusion from the habits of society, all were marshalled by memory, and placed in dread array before the mental view of Agnes ; she paced the room in anxious distress, and sincerely bewailed

bewailed her own folly, in dispatching, upon such an errand, one so unequal to the undertaking; and who might, and no doubt had, suffered some serious inconvenience, from her total ignorance of the town, or its inhabitants.

The clock struck eleven! the alarm of Agnes scarcely admitted of increase: she now determined to consult the people of the house, as to what steps it might be necessary to take, in order to ascertain the fate of Benedicta. Her knock at the door of their usual sitting-room was answered by a desire that she would enter; and having imparted the cause of her intrusion at so late an hour, they professed entire ignorance of the absence of her attendant, and much surprise at its continuance.

Poor Agnes, in tears, implored their aid under her present distress.

The husband and wife regarded each other with significant looks, not unobserved, though perfectly unintelligible to their visitor. After a few minutes pause, however,

however, during which the dark eyes of Dobson surveyed her with no friendly expression, he exclaimed—"Why, look you, Miss, I like to be plain and downright; you may be a very good sort of a body, for any thing that I know to the contrary, but I never liked your foreign gentry; and so I would not have let you come into my house, if it had not been for my wife; and so I desires you will pay us our money to-morrow, and go your ways, for I suspects you have come here for no good. I have not lived so long in the world, without knowing a bit of its ways, and I makes it out that the old one has trampt with the best part of your goods, and you mean to make off in a sly way with the rest, and so chouse us of our just due; but I shall keep a good look-out upon you; and if you attempt to go out to find your accomplice, why I'll find the means to lay you by the heels; and so now you knows my mind."

"Dear

“ Dear Dobson,” cried Sarah, while the tears started into her eyes, “ look how pale she is ! don’t frighten the poor girl ; though she did try to pry into things she had no business with, yet I don’t think there is any harm in her.”

“ But I say there is,” interrupted the surly husband ; “ and if she stops here, she’ll blow us to the devil, for I see she is full of mischief ; why can’t I read it in her face ?”

The poor trembling Agnes heard, in dismay, her sentence—“ I have not the ability, as yet, to pay you your demand,” she at length articulated ; “ but, indeed, I will endeavour to do so in a few days ; but do not thus alarm me, I entreat you—I am a stranger—”

“ Aye, strange enough I believe you are,” muttered Dobson ; “ but it is no use to stand talking here, shilly-shally. Go to bed, young woman,” added he, glancing towards a clock in a corner of the room ;  
“ wife

“ wife never sits up after eleven, and I don’t allow any body to sit up after her—so mind that.”

At this moment a gentle knock was heard at the window—“ It is Benedicta !” joyfully exclaimed Agnes, and while every feature beamed renovated hope, she darted towards the door.

Dobson started from his seat, and with a push so violent as almost to bring her to the ground, prevented her purpose ; and drawing the bolt across the door, in a voice of thunder, added—“ Nobody is there—nobody, I say ; what the devil makes you so officious ? go to bed, can’t you ; we are all going to bed, and if the woman does come at this hour of the night, she shan’t be let in.”

Sarah had kindly taken the hand of our poor terrified orphan, as in gentle accents she entreated her instantly to retire, and by way of apology for the brutal conduct of her husband, added—“ He is very angry, Miss, at your coming down stairs



so late. You know, he agreed particularly with you, never to be out of your room at this hour, and you have seen—have you not,” she asked with peculiar earnestness, “that we are a very quiet sober family?” Thus saying, she placed a candle in her hands, and having led her unresistingly to the foot of the stairs, kindly pressed her hand, as she emphatically repeated—“Do not make Dobson again angry: good night—*and go to bed.*”

The disconsolate girl returned to her chamber, under such accumulated distress as she had never before sustained. Time passed heavily on; the midnight hour had struck, but the mind of Agnes was abstracted; she was even, for a moment, unconscious of her own perilous situation. The poor forlorn Benedicta, encountering present danger, in the attempt to save her, wholly employed reflection, until she was aroused by the sound of men’s voices in an under tone. Alarmed by so unusual a circumstance, she recalled the scene which  
had



had so recently passed, with increasing alarm; and rising from her seat, she softly unclosed the door, and with cautious timid steps, crept on till she had reached the stairs. All was dark; but soon the well-distinguished tones of Dobson struck her ear.

“What use is it now to keep the dark lantern? turn the light round; what have you got to fear, now you are safe within doors?”

The faint glimmer of a lamp appeared to answer this appeal.

“Light t’other lamp,” resumed a second voice; “aye, hitch it up against the wall; and now that’s done, pray what was the reason I was hindered coming in, when I gave the signal at the window?”

“Reason! why reason enough,” echoed Dobson; “that little sly devil up stairs had nearly smoked us, and that was a pretty time, truly, to let you in, when she was down here in this very room; but I’ll teach her to pry into other people’s affairs;

I'll get rid of her before this time to morrow; so let her sleep on, and never mind her now—but why don't you help me? lift him a bit this way—he's plaguy heavy—there—drag him a bit further—that'll do."

The door which shut at the foot of the staircase had been left ajar by Sarah, when she quitted the hand of her lodger on bidding her good night, and this afforded Agnes the opportunity of seeing what was passing in the kitchen, where they were all now assembled. She beheld the door of that apartment which she had once incurred the displeasure of her hostess for attempting to open, now thrown wide upon its hinges, while the two men staggered beneath their load, and approached its entrance.

Our orphan gathered courage from desperation; she leant over the railing to get a nearer view; but what was her horror at beholding a dead body supported between them!—She sunk upon the steps, unable  
to

to sustain her trembling form, although sense had not deserted its station. The corpse was laid upon the floor !

“ We have had tight work with him,” cried one man, “ but ‘ *hard pains riches gains,*’ and we have well earned all we got.”

“ Come, come, don’t stand to jaw ; let’s be gone,” exclaimed another ; “ the moon’s beginning to rise, and she’s no friend to us, for our deeds be dark enough,” he added with a grin—“ We have made a good job on’t, Dobson, to-night ; so share the coin, my lads, for the dead tell no tales, for our comfort ; and as to the living,” added he, pointing with his finger to the ceiling, “ why we’ll leave her to your care, comrade.”

“ Well, well,” resumed the first, “ then why trouble yourself with his business ? suppose, if the devil should owe us a grudge, and send any passengers this way, before we bring in t’other one, ’twould go hard but we should all take a trip to the county jail before we part again.”

The trembling listener lost the remainder of the conversation for a few minutes, when her attention was recalled by seeing them return, bearing in a second lifeless form, and lay it by the side of the former!

Unable longer to support the scene, she crept back to her chamber, hardly conscious of existence, and with nerveless fingers locked the door, and threw herself, almost fainting, upon the bed. The scenes she had just witnessed in indescribable horror, passed in review before her! the words which so obviously related to herself at length obtruded, and having done so, they rested with fearful apprehension on her appalled senses! “*I’ll get rid of her before this time to-morrow—I’ll teach her to pry into other people’s affairs!*—Gracious God!” thought the terrified girl, “is this wretch then so familiarized to murder, as thus carelessly to determine upon the destruction of an unoffending fellow-creature? and thus providentially warned

warned of his intention, can I remain here and meet it? Yet which way can I escape? my poor Benedicta's unaccountable absence! Heaven protect and guard the worthy creature!—but I dare not indulge reflection upon her possible fate! the wretches believed her in possession of the greater part of my valuables, and may have taken her life to obtain them. Perhaps, nay, is it not more than probable, that one of the bodies I have just seen secreted is the remains of my faithful old friend? But I must not incapacitate myself for immediate exertion;” and wiping the heavy dew of terror from her brow, Agnes rose from the bed, and taking three guineas from her slender store, enclosed it in an envelope; while with a trembling hand she traced a few lines, assigning no reason for her flight, but inability to pay her debt, and the solemn assurance that it should be liquidated, as soon as she could obtain the means for doing so; leaving it

on the table : and having made a bundle as large as she could carry, of the more useful part of her clothes, she descended the stairs with tottering steps.

The door was only bolted ; she soon freed herself, therefore, from the house. The moon now shone bright, and with irregular pace she pursued her course. Having walked until she found herself perfectly exhausted by fatigue, she was compelled to a seat upon a milestone ; but here she had not remained many minutes, ere a public machine passed. With feeble voice she stopt its speed, and inquired whether they could receive her within ? A rough voice from the window answered—  
“ No, we want no such cattle ; we have got as much as the act of parliament allows, and it is hot enough, without more to scorch us to cinders.”

“ Avast there !” cried a disabled tar in the corner ; “ shiver my timbers if I will leave the little frigate upon the breakers ;  
she



she has fired a signal of distress, and I will tow her into port. So, yeo ho! bear alongside our man of war."

"But I say she shan't come in," cried the first voice.

"We'll see whether she shan't," echoed a tall, large-boned, masculine-looking figure, who, leaning her arm out, opened the door.

The coachman having made his bargain, let down the step, and the trembling Agnes was '*hauled in*,' as her new friend phrased it, and with tearful eyes, thanked them a thousand times. Six were already in the machine; the sailor, his wife, a child of about four years of age, and an infant in arms, were on one side; and the crabbed old man, and one almost as surly as himself, occupied the other; so between these two our heroine was placed; but, provoked at being compelled to admit her, they contrived to render her situation so intolerably suffocating, that, added to her other sufferings of terror, fatigue, and



anxiety, they had scarcely proceeded half a mile ere she fainted.

Honest Bowen, in attempting to admit air, in his hurry shivered the glass to pieces, and enraged at his accident, dashed his crutch through the other, exclaiming—“The little cock-boat is out of her depth, and can’t weather the storms of the ocean she is launched upon—haul her nearer to the starboard.”

“Poor little soul!” exclaimed the compassionate Brobdignag; “she shall have my seat, Jack. You shall stay in the coach, to take care these two cannibals don’t eat her up; for though the pretty creature begged so hard to come in, they had no pity upon her. Look at her delicate skin, and see what a gloss there is upon her fine long hair!—Well, if ever I seed such a beauty in all my days!”

“Ah!” cried her persecutor, “I dare say that has been her ruin; ‘*handsome is as handsome does,*’ is my mind, whenever I see such fine madams.”

“Hold

“Hold your wicked provoking tongue,” cried the enraged female; “if all men were like you, you vile old sinner, nobody would have nothing to do with you, and the world would be soon at an end; for you’ll go to the grave, I’ll answer for it, a Jack without a Gill.”

“Let ’em alone, Hetty, let ’em alone; don’t talk any more in the way of reason, and common sense, and answering to his blasphemous stuff; you may see what ’a be by the cut of his jib, and the poor girl will be frightened again. So, wife, if you’ll mount aloft, why I’ll take her under convoy; so come, for here’s one grapple-iron left to be useful.” And stretching forth the only arm the poor fellow had, he drew her on the seat next him; while his equally compassionate helpmate, resigning her sleeping charge to the care of its natural protector, the hitherto silent but unaccommodating traveller, she ascended the roof of the carriage.

They now proceeded without interrup-

tion, except from the grumbling of their opposite neighbour; but when arrived at the inn, which was the final destination of the stage, poor Agnes, terrified by the noise of those around her, almost stupified by past and recent scenes, and yet sensible of remaining indisposition, retained her station. Bowen, however, at length inquiring where she meant to be moored, aroused her to a full sense of her situation; and bursting into tears, she was unable to articulate a reply. The worthy-hearted pair at length obtained sufficient information to recommend her rather to seek for lodgings, than to enter the house denominated an inn; as great expence, they conceived, would necessarily occur from her detention there, if but for a day. The sailor, therefore, took his quiescent fellow-traveller under his own care, while his wife relieved her of her bundle; and, in consequence of this arrangement, poor Bowen on his wooden leg, with Agnes on his arm, and Hetty at their heels, trudged off in pursuit

suit of some proper place of abode for the young stranger.

A neat and very decent house, at length, struck them, with a board at the window, signifying it to be a register-office for persons wanting employment; and the honest sailor and his rib deeming this a likely place to suit the declared state of slender finances of their companion, they entered, and made the necessary inquiry.

A smart pert-looking girl said she would call the mistress; and the mistress, after some hesitation, created, no doubt, by the incongruous appearance of the group, but at length removed by a simple tale of truth, agreed to receive the poor wanderer upon very moderate terms. Honest Bowen and his Hetty then took an affectionate leave, as they were on their way into Kent. With grateful heart and tearful eyes, Agnes thanked them again and again, for the essential service they had rendered her; and having seen them depart, she returned to the room she had just quitted,  
and

and after partaking of some refreshment, retired to bed, where neatness and civility gave a temporary respite to her woes.

At a late hour she awoke, refreshed and invigorated by the profound sleep she had enjoyed. The temporary calm she felt soon, however, gave way to apprehension, when, upon examining her purse, she found so very small a sum remained; and the reflection of being deeply, at least far beyond her means of payment, indebted by a positive and voluntary agreement to the murderer Dobson, gave her inexpressible grief and terror.

As soon as she had risen and dressed herself, she summoned a coach, and drove to the house of Mr. Bagley; but great was her disappointment to find it closed, and without the least trace of inhabitants. To her inquiry in the neighbourhood, all she gained was, that they neither knew or cared about them; the man was too proud to notice Miss Howard's old friends, and his too much so to notice him. This, with  
severest

severest animadversion upon both one and the other, closed all the intelligence she could gain.

Dispirited and wretched, she returned home; and, as her now only alternative was to maintain herself by the actual labour of her hands, she, with becoming fortitude, determined upon proper exertion.

In passing up stairs to her own apartment, the door of the drawing-room was open, and at a table sat a gentleman of very superior appearance; he was employed at a writing-desk, and seemed wholly absorbed in his subject. Agnes was closely followed by the pert girl she had first seen in the house, distinguished as Miss Mills, niece of the late landlord; she familiarly tapt Agnes upon the shoulder, and pointing to the gentleman, exclaimed—"There is an Adonis for you! did you ever see so elegant, so divine a creature?"

This speech was uttered in too loud a  
key



key not to reach the ear intended. The young man raised his eyes, and our Portuguese vanished with the rapidity of lightning, shocked lest he should have seen and ascribed to her the compliment lavished by her companion.

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## CHAP. IV.

Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak,  
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.

SHAKESPEARE.

.....

Hopeful sorrow o'er his face  
Breath'd a melancholy grace,  
And fix'd in every feature there

The mournful resignation of despair! MONTGOMERY.

### *Oswald, or the friendly Warning.*

SOME days passed without any occurrence worthy of remark, except an invitation from Mrs. Mills to pass an evening with her, which was civilly declined, under plea of indisposition. Several, however, of a similar nature, could not all be waved;

waved ; and she accepted one for the Sunday following. The elegant stranger she had frequently seen at a distance ; but observing that he appeared anxious to attract her notice, she carefully avoided affording him the opportunity.

In the interim, however, she had become better acquainted with Mrs. Mills, who was very respectably allied and educated. The orphan niece of a clergyman, poor and destitute, she had been induced to marry the worthy man she had, merely for a maintenance ; and conscious of the liberality of his conduct towards her, had granted him all she could bestow—gratitude and esteem. Repeated losses in trade, together with his recent death, had much reduced their originally small stipend ; and by letting of lodgings, together with keeping a register-office, the latter of which requiring no capital, she annually picked up a few guineas, which assisted her slender means of support.

She spoke in very high terms of their  
lodger,

lodger, but said he had been with them but a very short time, and lived entirely to himself. That the day before, upon hearing the postman's knock, he had himself ran to the door, and received his own letter, which defeated their hope of obtaining his name. The seal, a coronetted one, he had torn off, intending, she supposed, to throw it into the fire, but it had fallen on the hearth, and had been brought her by her niece. At the receipt of this letter, he had appeared overwhelmed with joy, and had instantly written what she imagined to be an answer, as a letter lay sealed upon his table, but without direction. He had given them no name by which to distinguish him; and upon being asked, he had laughingly replied—"Miss Mills has already given me the appellation of '*the mysterious stranger*,' and it bears so pretty an air of romance, that it would be cruel to dispel the charm;"—"and thus," added the communicator, "we are still left in uncertainty, though he was recommended

mended to our house by a very respectable family at Highgate, who were the early patrons of my late husband."

Sunday arrived, and Agnes was introduced to "*the mysterious stranger*;" they each started at the recognition—for the sailor of the packet met her eyes! He inquired, with apparent solicitude and interest, after her health; and then, with some emotion, if she had recently seen the family of lord Somerton? She laconically assured him she had not aspired to the honour of their acquaintance, and the theme was not pursued; though the subject appeared to have operated very powerfully upon the stranger, as for several minutes afterwards, his folded arms, and steady gaze on vacancy, gave indication of total abstraction; he was, however, at length aroused to present circumstance, and entered freely into conversation. The superior manners of the gentleman were supported by evidence of refined education, and the habits of good company, while

while his mind appeared to have received the most liberal gifts of Nature. The evening passed chearfully away, and the morning found Agnes closely engaged, as usual, at her work; but again she had agreed to take her tea with Mrs. Mills, and again she met the stranger.

These visits at length became so frequent, that the society of her new associate seemed almost necessary for her existence, for his presence always enlightened that gloom which had recently pervaded her mind, and his absence became a matter of serious uneasiness. Thus, unconsciously, had he gained such an ascendancy by a display of so many united attractions, as eventually subdued the heart of the poor orphan; while she fearlessly, because insensible of danger, daily exposed herself to the influence of his superior powers of captivation, till at length she found her work became irksome; every hour hung heavy, unless she held in perspective her evening treat; and when disappointed of



this, a sleepless night followed, and the morning found her listless and dispirited, with a languid disinclination to pursue that employment from which alone she could hope for support.

These were serious symptoms, and alarmed at the discovery, she heroically determined to quit her present situation, and hoped, foolishly hoped, much from time and absence ; but alas ! the poor stricken deer bore in her breast the barbed arrow ; the impression was deep, for superior mental, as well as personal recommendations, had united to assail a heart formed for love.

With tearful eyes and tremulous emotion, she hinted to Mrs. Mills the necessity of seeking employment abroad, as she feared the exertions with her needle would be inadequate to her support. The good woman offered all within her power ; but the swelling breast of Agnes could only thank her, and decline all schemes for a continuance with her. At length, finding  
her

her determined upon a removal, she acknowledged a situation presented itself, that she considered as a very eligible one; application had been made to her by a friend, who was the housekeeper in lord Somerton's family, for a young woman who could be well recommended, and whose education and manners would fit her for a companion to lady Susan Edgecombe, whose ill health rendered her a perfect recluse, and who stood in need of such an auxiliary, to support the absence of her almost constantly dissipated mother.

Agnes well recollected the interesting companion of her voyage, and joyfully accorded to the proposal. The next morning was, therefore, fixed upon for a visit to the invalid; and the evening of that day was to be devoted, as had now generally been the case, to Mrs. Mills's parlour.

With yet greater than usual trepidation, she once more encountered the fascinations of her dangerous inmate. In the course of conversation, the new arrangements

ments were introduced ; the effect was instantaneous—he became silent, agitated, and evidently endeavoured to suppress apparent emotion ; but when the name was mentioned, he lost all controul, and starting from his seat, with seeming unconsciousness exclaimed—“ Dear estimable Susan, beloved suffering angel ! ”—and resting his head upon his folded arms on the table, sat for several minutes lost in thought, totally abstracted, and immoveable as a statue !

Mrs. Mills and her niece surveyed him with astonishment ; but what were the feelings of poor Agnes ? this unequivocal confession, this full confirmation of the fears she had vainly attempted to banish, subdued her newly-acquired fortitude, and overcame her strength entirely ; she motioned with her hand not to be noticed in her retreat ; and fearful that the effects of mental anguish would become obvious by indisposition, abruptly left the room.

Upon her return, she found the party had entered upon another and far less interesting

interesting subject, and her late desertion was passed over in silence.

The next day she made her purposed visit, and, preceded by the housekeeper, was received by the countess of Somerton, with *hauteur* almost intolerable to her yet unsubdued spirit ; but sensible of the necessity of submitting to circumstance, she smothered her wounded feelings, and made a reference, for personal respectability, to Mr. Bagley, whose place of abode had at length been discovered, by her friend Mrs. Mills's reference to a London directory, as, from the ignorance of our orphan that such a guide had existence, it had, until the present moment, remained unknown.

The countess announced her attention of possessing herself of the desired information ; and every other matter having been previously arranged, she was requested to wait the pleasure of lady Susan Edgecombe in her *boudoir*, where the lovely girl soon made her appearance, and immediately acknowledged their former acquaintance.

With lady Somerton she had felt too much, to afford more than was absolutely necessary to entitle her to consideration for the situation she solicited; but to her daughter she unreservedly gave the whole of her little history, and with bitter tears deplored the fate of poor Benedicta, who yet lived in the memory of lady Susan.

She was soothed by the kind and tender sympathy of her interesting auditor; and the day being fixed for her taking upon herself her new occupation, if the reference she had made proved satisfactory to the seniors of the family, she took leave, and reached her own abode in safety, though not with peace as her companion. The success of her expedition was hailed with both joy and sorrow, by the worthy Mrs. Mills, and received in total silence by her too-interesting lodger.

Each day that passed increased that heaviness of heart which had insensibly to herself taken possession of the orphan; and having received a decisive and satisfactory

tory answer from lady Somerton, she looked forward with anguish to the one that would separate her, possibly for ever, from him who had, ere this epoch, become lord of her affections.

The fatal morning at length arrived, when the inquisitive Miss Mills informed her, that the stranger had not entered his bed the preceding night, but had passed it in pacing his chamber to and fro. At daylight he had left the house, and was yet absent. At four o'clock, however, he returned; but what was very unusual, his wine-decanter had been entirely emptied. In half an hour, the following letter was brought her.

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“MADAM,

“CONSCIOUS that the mystery which has attached to me, ever since I have had the pleasure of first meeting with you, must, in defiance of the candour of your nature, have subjected me to sus-  
E 2 picion,



picion, I almost fear the impression left in your mind must necessarily be a very unfavourable one, and, consequently, that you may deem the liberty I have now taken an unwarrantable obtrusion; but, although imperious circumstance forbids the removal of the veil, I trust you will be induced to attend to the admonition of him who is deeply interested in your welfare.

“In entering the family of the earl of Somerton, you will have much to encounter, from the insolence of high birth attaching merit to that situation only which affords worldly influence and respect. In their eldest hope, you will meet with a man peculiarly gifted with the dangerous endowments of prodigal nature, as to person, with manners possessed of all the plausibility of fashionable celebrity, and too vain of natural attractions, to seek any resource from art, to heighten them by an assumption of any of the estimable qualities of the mind; with him you will, therefore,

therefore, be secure. But in *Oswald*, you will be fascinated by the appearance of all that can adorn humanity!—Yet, oh too-charming Agnes, *beware of him!* suffer not your heart to be entangled by his obtruding perfections. Or, if your peace be assailed by a residence beneath the same roof with this dangerous companion, fly, oh fly the certainty of wretchedness! receive timely warning, and avoid, as you would destruction, the accomplished Oswald!

“ Last of the family group you will associate with, appears the sweet Susan! watch, dear Agnes, with assiduous care, this tender blossom—oh! she is most worthy of all your solicitude—of my warmest affection! dear angelic sufferer!—shield her from all that may disturb her peace, that lays within the compass of your power, and tell her—no, you must not tell her aught about me!—Some future opportunity, and I shall trust in your kindness, in the interest she will inspire, to deliver her

a letter. At present I have already stepped beyond the boundaries I had prescribed myself.

“Adieu, dear Miss Dursley. May kindred angels watch your steps, and protect you from every danger!”

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CHAP. V.

————— On my strain,  
 Perhaps even now, some cold fastidious judge  
 Casts a disdainful eye ; and calls my toil,  
 And calls the love and duty which I sing,  
 The dream of Folly !

AKENSIDE.

.....

Not his the form, nor his the eye,  
 That youthful maidens wont to fly !

SCOTT'S LADY OF THE LAKE.

*Fashionable Age and antique Youth.*

WITH the letter in her hand, Agnes sat  
 ruminating on its singular contents : That  
 lady Susan was beloved, was now but too  
 evident, for here he had unreservedly de-  
 clared it ; and if so, what could be more

cruel than his unceasing attention, his indirect equivocal professions to herself, which were plainly intended to say more than met the ear, and yet preserved his honour free from stain of public observation? She was now, for the first time in her life, assailed by self-reproach; she had early seen the danger of indulging in his society, and yet wanted the necessary exertion of resolution to quit the fascination, until too late! all that was left for her now, therefore, was to conceal the vulture, and suffer it in silence to prey on the vital source of peace. Despair supplied the absence of fortitude; and having placed the valued paper in her pocket, she retired to her thorny pillow.

To sleep was a vain attempt; therefore, at the dawn of morning she quitted her bed, and busied herself in everything without doing anything; for her slender wardrobe had been soon packed, and lay before her in the circumference of a large band-box. Mrs. Mills had invited her to dinner, but  
fearful

fearful of encountering him she was now determined to avoid, she declined it, under pretence of writing. At six o'clock a coach was called; and all she could denominate her own being placed within it, she descended the stairs, and with trembling steps, entered the little parlour of the worthy widow. Painful was their adieu, but the gentleman appeared not; and with an aching heart Agnes repaired to the splendid mansion of the earl of Somerton.

She was ushered into a very neat chamber, adjoining that of the invalid, whom she was informed had already retired to rest, and that she would receive intimation at what hour in the morning her ladyship would be visible.

Having declined either tea or supper, and feeling exhausted from the want of rest the preceding night, our heroine followed the example of lady Susan, and went to bed. Busy reflection obtruded, and the watchman's hoarse voice had proclaimed the successive hours as they pass-



ed, until the thunder of a footman's appeal at the hall door aroused her to present circumstance. Much alarmed, she threw on her night-gown, and opened the chamber-door; a burst of laughter met her astonished ear, for she had supposed the whole family long since in the regions of Morpheus.

"Your ladyship paints the scene to admiration! the glowing colours of ridicule, in your hands, lose none of their effect; how much I should have enjoyed the participation of your amusement!"

"And *the companion* you say, Selby, has absolutely gone to bed half a dozen hours ago? in compliment, no doubt, to the pensive Susan," interrupted lady Somerton.

"True, upon my word," returned another voice; "the description your ladyship afforded us was so irresistibly *comique*, that Curiosity had operated her usual effect upon me, and I waited in anxious expectation of the realization of the picture; but  
'the

‘ the humble friend’ appears to have divined my intention, and by an elopement to the regions above, has disappointed my scheme.”

The drawing-room door was now closed, and the remainder of the conversation consequently lost. The poor Agnes could not doubt who had been the subject of their mirth; “ the companion,” “ the humble friend,” alas ! could not be mistaken ; her proud bosom swelled with resentment at the discovery that she had already excited derision, though she could not conceive upon what it could have been founded. Filled with indignation, she slowly returned to her chamber ; her education and recluse life, which had been wholly abstracted from modern manners, had left her in total ignorance that such beings existed, who could feel gratification in steeping yet deeper the bitter bread of dependance ; that to wound the broken-hearted afforded a source of plea-

sure to many of the sons, and I blush to add, the daughters of modern times; and that "a poor gentlewoman," "a well-educated beggar," was of all miserable situations that which required the largest portion of fortitude to sustain with any degree of self-command and resignation.

As the drawing-room whither they then were was immediately beneath her apartment, she long heard the confused sound of mingled voices, as the countess had brought home with her a party, consisting of at least half a dozen, who had been amused with some tale at her expence, but of what nature poor Agnes could not divine. Conscious of no cause that could subject her to the cruelty exercised, in being selected by lady Somerton for entertainment of that description she had partially heard, she felt so much of the inherent pride of her nature aroused, that it was with difficulty she could subdue her feelings, or soothe them into that necessary

sary composure which could successfully solicit the aid of "tired nature's sweet restorer."

The next morning the breakfast of the new inmate was served in a dressing-room off her chamber; and about twelve she was informed lady Susan Edgecombe would receive her.

On making her appearance, she was greeted by her ladyship with the greatest kindness and affability; and having pointed to a chair near her, after the few commonplace compliments of the day, she thus addressed her—"My communications, Miss Dursley, may, perhaps, be somewhat abrupt, yet I deem it very necessary that I should not delay to inform you exactly in what manner you will be received in this house. You will too soon discover," she added with a deep sigh, "that we are not a very united family; yet in some points, I, as an individual, have no cause of complaint, while on others—but no matter now. In the first place, then, I will give you a sketch

sketch of my own situation and establishment. I am permitted a carriage of my own, for even unnecessary parade and ostentation are observed here. I have my own footman of course, waiting-maid, and every other appendage usual to my rank and situation: but recent ill-health," added she, pausing, "and worse spirits, unfit me for scenes of dissipation, and render it necessary to procure for me some respectable female companion, who may supply the constant absence of lady Somerton from the sick couch of her child; but this companion, it was expected, should fill two situations I conceived wholly incompatible. She was to be with me when the countess did not stand in need of her services, and when she did, was considered to be at her devotion. But such is the natural haughtiness of my mother's disposition, that the mind which could bend to her yoke could afford no congeniality for mine; and it is not an *attendant* I seek. Two have already been discharged from the situation; but  
you

you are now established, and, it is so understood, upon a very different footing. You are to be considered," she smilingly added, "to be attached to me *alone*, and from what little I have seen and heard of you, I doubt not your being rendered as comfortable as circumstances may permit. I wish you to feel no restraint; your two apartments will never be intruded upon, and you will ever be treated by me as my *friend*, and, as such only, I trust you will consider yourself."

The affectionate and grateful heart of Agnes swelled with emotions, to which she could not give utterance. Lady Susan held out her hand; it was enclosed in those of her *protégée*, and pressed to her bosom, at the moment a servant entered with two letters for her lady, when Agnes embraced the opportunity to withdraw.

In half an hour she returned to the invalid, who, observant of the agitation which was still apparent in the countenance  
of



of our orphan, in order to relieve the embarrassing pause of conversation, requested her to read aloud the newspaper of the day, which had arrived with the letters. This occupied their attention till the sound of the dinner-bell greeted their ears. Lady Susan threw a shawl over her shoulders, and requesting the arm of Agnes, descended to the dining-room.

Lord and lady Somerton were already there, as was also Mr. Oswald, the dreaded Mr. Oswald ! The reception of Miss Dursley by the party was perfectly civil and polite. They made very earnest and affectionate inquiries after the health of the invalid, to whom, during the repast, every attention was paid by the seniors. Oswald was distant, reserved, and silent ; while but little conversation, save on local subjects, passed between the rest of the party.

On retiring after dinner, the earl announced company on the following day, and with a significant smile, hoped the fair

Susan

Susan would attend, and, *in that case*, the party would be increased by a very desirable acquisition.

Her ladyship's whole frame underwent agitation, her cheeks bloomed with fleeting roses, and she faintly answered—"If able to bear the fatigue, my dear lord, depend upon me—otherwise, I know you will kindly excuse me."

The smile of the earl vanished; a slight and rather stiff inclination of the head was his reply; and the ladies retired.

On reaching her *boudoir*, the composure of lady Susan resumed its station, and she tried to talk, and tried to smile—but it was the smile of an aching heart!

A few days elapsed, marked with no event of sufficient interest to record. One morning, however, lady Susan's carriage was ordered, and she stepped into it, followed by Agnes, to whom suddenly turning, she said—"Have you, Miss Dursley, any friend with whom you feel a desire to pass an hour or two? I do not wish to leave you  
in

in the carriage; and I go out to-day upon a particular occasion—a very painful one. To be candid, I am anxious to be alone; and will call for you on my return, at the house of your friend.”

Agnes named Mrs. Mills.

“Mrs. Mills!” interrupted lady Susan, in accents of extreme astonishment; “what of Green-street, Grosvenor-square?”

“The same,” cried Agnes, surveying her with surprise.

“*My* carriage must not be seen there,” she replied with quickness.

Agnes coloured; she had no other friend to go to—“Mrs. Mills is a very good, a very respectable woman—”

“You may impute my refusal to take you there to a wrong cause,” her ladyship hastily resumed; “it is not dictated by pride—ah no!” continued she, bursting into tears, “a more sad, a far more painful motive guides me; the exclamation which surprised you was involuntary.”

For several minutes they continued silent,

lent, and the carriage proceeded. At length the invalid resumed the conversation. —“ Will you have any fears at going in a hackney-coach alone? if not, to a moment I will stop at the corner of Grosvenor-street.” She added, looking at her watch—“ At four o'clock be there in your coach, but do not detain me, for I shall be very anxious to return—very anxious indeed,” she added, relapsing into that total abstraction from present objects which her companion had before observed.

Agnes professed herself ready, without fear, to pursue the plan proposed; a coach was called, and the ladies separated.

Our orphan was received by the excellent Mrs. Mills with tears of joy. In fear and hope, we must however acknowledge, she watched the door, in momentary expectation of the entrance of him she so anxiously looked for. Having discussed every subject that mutually interested them, a silence not unusual upon such occasions followed.

followed. At length Mrs. Mills suddenly exclaimed—"Miss Dursley, have you quite forgotten my niece's '*mysterious stranger*?' Ah, my dear girl! I easily divined the true cause for your leaving us; but, believe me, I should not have hesitated one moment which to have parted with, you or him, if that could have decided the matter. The evident secrecy with which he clothes himself, argues something not right; yet the whole of his apparent conduct is so. In fact, how could I then refuse admission to him, who has, without seeking it, gained our esteem, and who would, doubtless, have defeated my purpose? as, under our then circumstances, he would have been our equally-frequent visitor, if not permitted to continue our actual inmate."

Agnes attempted to rally her spirits, and treat the matter with *badinage*; but it would not do; and the sombre prevailed, in defiance of every endeavour to exclude it.

"He is gone out in a carriage this morning,"

ing," resumed Mrs. Mills; "and has left the hour of his return uncertain, possibly not till late."

At this part of the speaker's information the clock struck the third quarter after three; and Agnes, till then totally unconscious how rapidly the time had passed, took a hasty but affectionate leave of her friend, and repaired to the appointed spot, where the carriage of lady Susan Edgcombe soon appeared: she stepped in, the door was closed, and she turned to address her ladyship, whom she discovered in an agony of tears!

Astonished and distressed, she continued silent, from irresolution as to what mode of conduct she ought to pursue, whether to attempt affording consolation, or to affect inattention to these marks of sorrow; the latter she at length determined on, and it was acquiesced in by the interesting mourner. On arriving at home, the invalid drew a veil over her face, and hurried to her chamber; soon after which an apology

was



was offered for not attending the dinner-table, from the plea that fatigue had arisen from the airing of the morning.

The countess paid her daughter a visit in the evening, and was received by her with unusual cheerfulness; the next day lady Susan promised to join a small party; and the fashionable mother and her lovely interesting offspring parted, the one for the opera—the other to her bed!

The following day the earl reminded the invalid of her promise, which she prepared to fulfil, having made it a point that Agnes accompanied her, in which she at length very unwillingly acquiesced; and they separated, after spending a rational morning *tête-à-tête*, to obey the summons of the toilette.

The beauty of Agnes was of superior stamp; she was tall, graceful, and exquisitely formed, with a face which not only exhibited regular features, but beamed with expression and animation. Her dress had hitherto been extremely plain, and  
certainly

certainly regulated more by taste than fashion ; but the kindness of her patroness had now afforded her the means of uniting them ; and, arrayed in her new and becoming habiliments, she scarcely recognized herself. Having finished her own attire, she waited the summons of her friend, who, claiming the privilege of an invalid, had wrapped herself in a white satin pelisse, the swansdown which ornamented it scarcely surpassing the delicate whiteness of the throat it approached. The exertion of dressing had given the most vivid and beautiful colour to her cheeks, and the emblem of youth and beauty, a perfect Hebe, she descended the stairs.

A large circle was already assembled, as she entered, leaning on the arm of Agnes. From the opposite side of the room, a tall and graceful stranger advanced ; his appearance and air were foreign, and his accent confirmed the impression. With the polished ease of a courtier, he complimented the lovely pair ; and while his eyes  
were

were bent with rapture on the sweet Susan, he begged her to present him to her companion.

The face of Agnes crimsoned with confusion; she felt humiliated by the accidental but just appellation he had bestowed; but lady Susan hastened to relieve her. —“ My dear *friend*, give me leave to present you to the duke of Braganza.”

The manner, the considerate kindness of the invalid, restored her to that self-possession which enabled her to return his grace’s politeness, who, having handed the fair Susan to a seat, placed himself beside her.

Lord Somerton, who now joined the trio, in high spirits, and perfect good-humour, complimented the improved appearance of his daughter. Mr. Oswald then approached, and with perfect good-breeding, and as perfect coldness, made his inquiries after the health of her ladyship; she replied with equal civility and equal distance, without raising her eyes from her fan, on  
which

which they rested, and he resumed his seat with the same *sang froid*.

At dinner the merits of our modern poets were severally discussed, when the duke of Braganza, lord Somerton, and Mr. Oswald, bore conspicuous parts in the debate. The latter made quotations from several, from which he deduced his observations and comparisons; they were acute, appropriate, and replete with good sense. Agnes became a very attentive listener; she had never before had the opportunity of judging for herself, of the pretensions of that being whom the warning voice of friendship had conjured her to shun, whose very presence she had dreaded to behold. Yet never was man less formed to inspire such sentiments! his observations were delivered in elegant and refined language; while at times, a playful wit, and vivacious repartee, excited the frequent smile of approbation from his attentive auditors.

At length, he pursued the earl through a debate, where he had decidedly the ad-

vantage; and seasoning his well-applied arguments with light *badinage*, exhausted the patience of the noble peer, by parrying, with great dexterity, adroitness, and good-humour, some observations, which eventually did not benefit the cause they were originally intended to support. At length, feeling himself unable to escape the never-failing weapons of point and wit, lord Somerton lost his self-possession, and replied, with strong acrimony—"You are severe, Mr. Oswald; and not only forget yourself, but compel me to remind you of it."

Oswald stopt; his fine face was suffused with indignation; he bowed low, and continued silent. The hilarity of the party was interrupted; each individual appeared to feel for the unhandsome treatment he had met with, and each redoubled those little courtesies, which the opportunity of a dinner-table afforded, to efface the impression from his mind; but it appeared to have sunk deeper—even to the heart. The  
harmony

harmony which had reigned had been effectually disturbed ; and however appearance may attempt to cover reality, it was not to be perfectly restored.

The next day Oswald was gazetted for a company in a Highland regiment, with orders to join without delay. As this had been for some weeks expected, everything had been prepared ; and the following day he accordingly left the house of lord Somerton.

The countess had required the attendance of Agnes to the theatre the next evening ; but as lady Susan was materially indisposed, she was on the point of declining it ; and innocently assigning that as the cause, her friend reminded her of the reproof it would indirectly convey to her mother : at her instigation, therefore, she complied with the engagement. The duke of Braganza joined the party, and she had the opportunity of conversing with him for near half an hour, during which the eyes of lady Somerton were



fixed upon her with uneasy expression. She at length contrived to separate them; and having done so, Agnes heard the duke complaining of her cruelty, in having removed from him his fair companion, who, he added, appeared as fond of extolling the perfections of lady Susan Edgcombe as himself.

“In truth, my lord, she has some cause. Lady Susan has annihilated the distance birth and circumstance have placed between them, and converted the hireling into the confidential friend. The girl, however, to do her justice, does not presume upon indulgent condescension; and to-night I have admitted her in my train, for she is really not ill-bred, and certainly never obtrusive.”

His grace again pursued the eulogium, spoke highly of her understanding, as well as personal recommendations, and complimented the absentee on superior discernment, in discovering and supporting this assemblage of youth, beauty, and merit.

The

The countess did not appear much gratified by the theme, and the duke was too well-bred, upon making the discovery, to persecute her further; but poor Agnes, who had overheard the whole, was too much depressed and mortified to resume conversation, and therefore sat abstracted and absorbed in painful reflection, notwithstanding the benevolent exertions of her noble advocate again to engage her attention.

The gay yet haughty lady Somerton divided and scattered her smiles around upon the flatterers who thronged her box, and was escorted to her carriage by a little regiment of beaux; while Agnes, on her return, having found lady Susan retired to bed, immediately sought her own room and similar repose, after the uncommon exertion of her spirits through the day.

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## CHAP. VI.

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There's something in her soul,

O'er which her melancholy sits on brood,

And I do doubt the hatch.

There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves,

You must translate.

SHAKESPEARE.

### *The Heir and the natural Son.*

THE next morning, the pallid cheeks and swollen eyes of the poor invalid, proclaimed a sleepless night; but the attempt to conceal it was the signal for her sympathizing friend to wave observation, and enter upon the detail of the amusement the theatre afforded, both upon the stage, and that more immediate part of the audience with whom she had conversed; but of course  
carefully

carefully avoided touching upon the painful mortification to which she had herself been so unnecessarily subjected. She did not at first observe, that the silence which her companion observed had arisen from total inattention to her detail; but a pause at length ensuing, she was satisfied that not a syllable had even been heard. The mind of lady Susan appeared wrapt in other matter, and was certainly not alive to present communication. At length she addressed her—"My dear Miss Dursley, I am about to put your affection for me to the test. I am under peculiar circumstances of distress, and it is in your power materially to relieve me from some that press heavily on me. Are you willing to devote a short time to your friend? All," she added, sighing, "will soon be over! my death may close the scene, or if not, your kindness may avert the mandate of destruction! Your penetration must have discovered the state of my heart; it is not only fervently attached to a de-

serving object, but is at this moment a prey to misery ! My father is anxious for the connexion the duke of Braganza has done me the honour to propose ; we were acquainted at the German Spa, and soon after our return, he was appointed envoy extraordinary from his own court to that of St. James's ; the negociation is yet pending, and my family are most anxious that I return his wife. The alliance is a desirable one, in every respect, to them, and I am not surprised at the anxiety of my relations that I embrace it—But it cannot be,” she added, in an agony of tears ; “ my whole soul is devoted to another ; it is a reciprocal affection, and you must aid me, or I am undone ! I have written my father a letter to-day, for I am unequal to conversation on the subject, and I have implored his permission to give my final negative to the proposals of the duke ; but whether this be granted or not, I have begged to be allowed a few weeks quiet, and change of air, at a hunting-lodge of his

his lordship's in this neighbourhood, as my health is rapidly on the decline. I am now momentarily expecting his answer; in the mean time, my dear girl, the first service I require of you is to go in a hackney-coach (for my carriage must not convey you) to the house of Mrs. Mills: inquire," she continued, almost suffocated by her tears, "for the gentleman who is her lodger; deliver this letter to his *own hands*; and receive his reply. On your return I will unfold the rest. Do not delay, Agnes, for now you must aid me, or I am lost indeed!"

The trembling hand of our Portuguese was extended to receive the letter; unable longer to suppress her feelings, her eyes streamed with tears; she sobbed her determination to serve, at all hazards, the lovely girl before her; and retired with precipitation to her own room, to prepare for the dreaded interview. Lost to hope herself, she relinquished that sheet-anchor of life,



and nobly, firmly resolved to assist her friend to the extent of her ability.

The fate of Benedicta had frequently obtruded upon the aching heart of Agnes. Advertisements had for months been continued in the newspapers, and every means for her discovery been adopted, but hitherto in vain. The recollection of the probable fate of this faithful follower of her fortunes, embittered, at this moment, the already overflowing cup of affliction. But wiping the tears from her cheeks, and assuming an air of composure, she ascended her humble mode of conveyance, and reached Green-street. The Mills' family were absent, but "the gentleman" was at home; he instantly obeyed her summons; but not allowing him time to address her, she presented the sealed paper.

The colour forsook his face, universal agitation pervaded his frame, as he burst the seal—"Gracious God!" he exclaimed, "where will this end? oh Susan, dear Susan,

Susan, what will become of us?" Then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he added,—"Excuse me, Miss Dursley, but I am not myself at this moment—this paper has almost driven me mad! Are the contents known to you?"

Agnes faintly uttered a negative.

"Will you kindly take charge of my reply?"

She signified that it was to receive that she waited.

He withdrew, and in half an hour returned with an answer. Anxious to be gone, she received the letter, and rose to depart. He retained her hand within his own, and looking earnestly at her, his eyes filled with tears, he raised it to his lips, and without speaking, handed her to the coach which had brought her.

Arrived at home, she was told the earl had been, for the last half hour, with his daughter, and she waited his quitting the apartment ere she made known her return. In the interim, seating herself at her win-

dow, she was soon absorbed in reflection upon her own misfortunes; from this she was startled by the loud voice of Lord Somerton, calling for assistance. She rushed into the room, and beheld him supporting in his arms the lifeless form of his daughter! she released him from his burthen, assisted by the waiting-woman, who, alarmed at the noise, had also entered. The earl then abruptly quitted the room, in all the agitation of uncontrouled rage.

Agnes began to relieve the invalid from some part of her clothes, as she yet remained senseless, and placed her on the bed; but what was her horror and consternation at beholding her in the situation of soon becoming a mother!—She raised her eyes to Beven.

“It is so, my dear madam,” she exclaimed, answering the eloquent appeal. “I am in the secret, and the life of my poor lady will be lost without immediate aid. Thank God! the earl and lady Somerton are engaged to dinner at Windsor, and

and do not return until to-morrow. My dear lady has been ill all night, and I am sure the crisis of her fate is near."

Lady Susan's mild blue eyes were again unclosed, but the pangs of childbirth were on her. The earl sent a summons for Miss Dursley; she answered his inquiries as had been agreed—"The invalid had recovered, but had requested not to be disturbed, as she meant to try the effects of a composing draught." The countess looked in upon her daughter, and having heard the same report, the noble pair drove off for Windsor and their dinner-party!

Beven was now dispatched for medical aid, and having introduced the doctor, again disappeared. In another hour she returned; and by ten in the evening the hapless lady Susan gave birth to a son, without the privity of any save the trio! Two hours afterwards Beven delivered into the hands of Agnes the new-born infant. —"Take this baby into your own dressing-room,

room, and deliver him to the person you will find there."

With trembling arms she received the precious charge, and with trembling steps she reached the room. A man, muffled in a great-coat and slouched hat, was pacing the floor; he raised his eyes—Agnes faintly shrieked—it was the man on earth she dreaded to behold! he sprang forward, and supporting the fainting girl, tenderly placed the infant on the sofa. Beven called to him that time was precious, and implored him not to lose a moment. He had lifted her in his arms to the adjoining *boudoir*. Sense had not forsaken her; he pressed her to his breast, at the moment Beven entered; he turned—saw her, and started; when catching the child in his arms, he covered it in his coat, and instantly disappeared.

Agnes returned to the chamber; lady Susan eagerly inquired if they were gone, and was answered in the affirmative.

“Thank

“Thank God ! thank God !” she energetically ejaculated ; “ my father and mother are not returned, and *all* is yet safe.”

The fortitude of the poor orphan had borne her through the arduous task ; but when reflection began to resume her powers, the weakened frame sunk beneath its pressure. She retired to her bed ill and fevered ; the next morning she was much worse, and for a week afterwards never quitted her pillow. The unremitting attention of Beven precluded other domestic assistance ; the report of the new-made mother was favourable, and on the tenth day Agnes crept into her room.

She was received with the warm tide of grateful affection, and folded in the arms of her friend, where she sobbed her congratulations on safety from the perils she had sustained.

“ Do not think ill of me, dear Agnes ; I have been imprudent, and may deserve punishment ; but if so, I have suffered severely, and yet suffer ; for oh, my sweet  
5 girl !



girl ! I do not at this moment know where either my infant or his father are ! nor dare I inquire but through you—all other communication is now cut off.”

Agnes sighed, and thought it a painful ordeal indeed ! but retreat was impossible—to persevere was a trial of victorious fortitude.

The next day our Portuguese was to dine with the family, for the first time since her illness; and having passed the morning with lady Susan, who had promised the following one should disclose the source of the strange event she had witnessed, her young friend retired to dress for dinner; but even actual occupation did not relieve her from a painful retrospect of the conduct of him whom, she felt conscious, had acquired a fatal influence over her repose; she retraced, in idea, those undeviating attentions, those apparent proofs of attachment to herself, which had so strongly marked his whole demeanour, during the happy period they had passed together

together beneath the roof of good Mrs. Mills, with a sentiment nearly allied to indignation, at a duplicity pregnant with misery to herself, and which, she was now convinced, had originated with him, from no better source than the amusement of the hour. But as the indulgence of reflection rendered her every moment less equal to those exertions of the mind which lay before her, she hastened over the duties of the toilette, and left her chamber, armed with resolution for self-possession.

On reaching the dining-room, she was received with great affability by the earl, nor was his countess less so; she smilingly informed her, that her son was arrived, and, she flattered herself, would remain with them at least six weeks, which was the extent of his present leave from the regiment—"But let him answer for himself."

The door opened—and lord Creswell entered! Agnes uttered a shriek, and sunk again upon the chair, from which she had the moment before risen.

The

The noble pair surveyed her with astonishment. The viscount approached, having, on his part, discovered not the smallest symptom of surprise, and very politely made his inquiries after her health. Shocked at the involuntary emotion of alarm she had manifested on unexpectedly beholding him, she returned his compliments in great confusion, and they took their seat at the dinner-table.

The conversation was restrained, unsupported, and languid, from the more than usual reserve of lord and lady Somerton, and a degree of unconquerable embarrassment, which, perhaps, naturally attached to Agnes; while lord Creswell alone appeared at ease. Lady Somerton at length gravely adverted to the recent rencounter, expressed her own surprise at the evident prior acquaintance of Miss Dursley with her son, and more particularly, as neither had ever mentioned the other.

Creswell smiled, while Agnes, covered with blushes, assured her ladyship that she

she had not the most remote idea of her former acquaintance being any way connected with the family of which she had now the honour of being an inmate; and, not aware of the circumstance, it would certainly, from this explanation, no longer appear wonderful that she had never mentioned the name of his lordship; indeed, her knowledge of him had been very little, and the acquaintance, if it might be so called, but of short continuance.

“And may I,” interrupted the countess, with sarcastic manner, “may I venture to inquire where this introduction took place, and by whom?”

“Nay, nay, my dear madam,” cried lord Creswell, laughing, “that is very unreasonable indeed. We do not admit inquisitors in England; and, unauthorized, you are not allowed to apply the torture.”

The indignation of the fair orphan was aroused, and she replied in a firm unaltered tone—“No mystery, my lady, attaches to  
that

that event. Mrs. Bagley, the wife of the gentleman to whom I made a reference ere I became a resident beneath this roof, and whose satisfactory report placed me here, was the individual by whom I had the honour of being presented to lord Creswell."

"And did you indeed, Miss Dursley, refer to my little friend Fanny? that must have been a month or two ago then, for

The bird in yonder cage confin'd,

has taken flight with a *compagnon de voyage*."

He was interrupted by the earl, who, with looks of angry suspicion, requested a termination of a conversation he had not been accustomed to hold but with his equals; and the subject appeared here too serious for *badinage*, as the young woman before them had, unfortunately, been admitted as the friend and constant companion of his sister, lady Susan, and that he must immediately request from his candour, a full  
elucidation

elucidation of what had to him been very unintelligible, and still more distressing.

The astonished and trembling Agnes sat immoveable! Lord Creswell bowed acquiescence; and the two gentlemen rising from their seats, retired together.

The eyes of lady Somerton surveyed her with scrutinizing earnestness, and she at length exclaimed—"Surely, Miss Dursley, you have not had the temerity to aspire to the heir of our house? sufficiently presumptuous, young woman, I should have conceived you, if you had looked with hope to obtain the hand of Mr. Oswald, the nameless *illegitimate* of my lord; but to the future representative of our ancient family, appears, but from circumstance, almost incredible."

In vain did the poor Agnes profess her innocence—in vain was the pure eloquence of truth exerted. The dread of a possibility of such an event as now threatened, in idea, her repose, was not to be supported by the haughty countess;  
and



and the weeping girl was ordered to prepare for instant removal from the roof which now sheltered her, and forbidden to presume again to enter the apartment of lady Susan Edgcombe.

Weak, and yet scarcely recovered from recent illness, our wretched orphan returned to her chamber; and having formed her plans for the future, with anguished heart prepared to comply with the mandate of the imperious unfeeling lady Somerton.

She had finished her task, and, fatigued with the exertion, small as it was, had thrown herself upon the bed, and pressing her hand upon her forehead, had closed her eyes, to avoid the light which oppressed them. From this situation she was roused by the opening of the door; but great was her astonishment at beholding the entrance of lord Creswell! He apologized for intrusion, but added, by way of excuse, that he had knocked at the door, but receiving no answer, had concluded

cluded her absent; and not daring to trust a messenger with the letter in his hand, he had determined upon leaving it on her toilette; and accordingly placing it there, he precipitately retired.

The letter was unsealed, but the contents were indeed mortifying to the proud mind of Agnes. They held out proposals of the most dishonourable nature; hinted at a removal from her present situation as unavoidable; his perfect knowledge of the miserable state of her finances; and his conviction that she had now no other refuge than his arms!

After a few moments reflection, she addressed a letter to lord Somerton, giving him, as she believed, a clue to the unmanly conduct of his son, by enclosing the letter she had just received from him; and ringing the bell, dispatched the packet, without an instant's delay, to his lordship.

A fearful hour elapsed, which was, at length, relieved by the re-appearance of the servant, who delivered her the reply.

Her

Her own letter was returned unopened ; the envelope contained a few lines, requesting that she would not again take the liberty of obtruding upon his lordship's time or patience ; that he had heard and seen enough to convince him she was a very improper associate for his daughter ; and that if the shadow of a doubt had before arisen, it had vanished within the last two hours, when he had himself seen lord Creswell quit a chamber, of which she had not only been considered as mistress, but was, at that very moment, the sole occupier ; and he summed up the whole, by an express order that she did not again attempt to enter the apartments of lady Susan Edgecombe, or even write to her, as the servants had been authorized to refuse both ; and concluded by requesting her removal as early as circumstances would permit ; hoping the inclosed sum would be deemed by her a sufficient remuneration for her services.

This last insult was somewhat more than

the

the native dignity of our Portuguese could sustain. She ordered a coach instantly, and having placed her small trunk within, followed it herself, and directed its course to Mrs. Mills, not knowing any other friend upon earth to whom she could apply for succour ! But, feeling she had a claim to the pecuniary consideration offered her, she hesitated not in retaining what was justly her due.

The conflict her mind had sustained, the change of circumstance since the morning, her yet invalid state, all united to assail the hapless girl ; but the affectionate, even maternal reception, of Mrs. Mills, soothed her into some composure ; and having unburthened her full heart of its weight of woe, and received the consolatory balm of truest sympathy, she retired for the night, comparatively composed. She had as yet made no inquiry after her late fellow-lodger ; and she, for the first time, reflected upon the consequences that might

result from her being again beneath the same roof.

By ceaseless effort, she, by the arrival of the breakfast-hour, had nerved herself with resolution even to meet him, she hoped, unmoved; but, on the family being assembled for that meal, she breathed with greater freedom, when she observed he appeared not; and also, that on passing by his drawing-room, the door was open, and the apartment unoccupied.

Ere the close of the morning, however, Mrs. Mills herself led to the important subject. She mentioned, that on the day Agnes had seen him at the house of lord Somerton, a woman, answering the description of Mrs. Beven, the waiting-woman of lady Susan Edgewcombe, had arrived, in a very hurried manner requested to see him, and having conversed with him but a few minutes, left the house, having evidently imparted some intelligence which had discomposed and agitated him

him to a very great degree; insomuch, that he had appeared in a state bordering upon distraction! On her departure, he had called up Mrs. Mills, and with ill-suppressed emotion, informed her, that a matter of infinite importance would oblige him to leave town for some days; that he, however, hoped to return in a week at farthest, but that it all rested on uncertainty; and having put a change of linen in a small portmanteau, it had been placed in a hired chaise, where he followed; and having driven off, she had not, from that period, either seen or heard of him; but that his apartments were retained at his request.

From this last intelligence, Agnes was aware of the impropriety of continuing in her present abode, even if pecuniary considerations, and the necessity of personal exertion for her future subsistence, had not presented themselves to her view; and once more she solicited her friendly hostess to endeavour obtaining for her a situation,



situation, where those talents Nature had bestowed, or education called into existence, could be rendered profitable to her: the one of teacher in a school at some distance from the metropolis, was therefore chosen, as calculated to answer the double purpose of a removal from scenes which served memory too strongly to rest on, of Utopian schemes of wrecked happiness; and also as it would, Mrs. Mills fondly hoped, be the means of restoring that health, which, with maternal anxiety, she saw had been severely sapped by the series of disappointments her young favourite had encountered.

But, of the failure of that asylum they had mutually hoped for, and the consequences attendant thereon, which threw her under the protection of Miss Vincent, our readers are already acquainted.

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## CHAP. VII.

————— Such then is the abode  
Of Folly in the mind ; and such the shapes  
In which she governs her obsequious train. AKENSIDE.

.....

Thou Vanity ! whose universal sway  
Alike the cynic and the fop obey ;  
Who widely potent, bear'st an equal rule,  
O'er birth-night balls, and Aristotle's school,  
Forsake thy glitt'ring shrine ; and, for a while,  
On labours destin'd to thy service smile. THURSTON.

### *Lore, and its Vagaries.*

SUCH were the contents of the narrative delivered by the young Portuguese ; and Florence, ever prompt in her decisions, had, in consequence, resolved upon receiving

ceiving the interesting Agnes beneath her paternal roof; and, by offering her so desirable an asylum, to secure to herself a near friend and companion. Without consulting, therefore, the will of her quiescent father, she at once made the proposal; and, with her usual sweetness of manner, gave full effect to the benevolent invitation.

The grateful foreigner accorded a ready assent, while the offered bond of friendship and protection was sealed with the tears of the forsaken orphan. Plans were soon formed for the future, and imagination, with both, trod the flowery path of ideal scenery; the fair visionaries indulged in speculative happiness, and were only recalled to the present by a summons to the tea-table.

Florence delayed not beyond the morning the communication of her recent arrangements to Mr. Vincent: but what was her astonishment, when he uttered a decisive negative to her schemes! Unaccustomed to contradiction, the present fell with tenfold

fold force, especially when she recalled to memory her own precipitancy. In reply, she now urged the impossibility of wounding the feelings of the poor foreigner, which had so lately been lulled to repose, on the security of her promises; but for once she found firmness opposed by her father, to her avowed wishes, as he very seriously added—"And how, my child, are you to be assured that your favourite is all she professes? the Mrs. Mills she pictures may really exist, and her story may be all very true; but is it not, at least, equally probable that it is deceptive? Be not impatient, Florence, but hear me out. I will admit, for argument sake, that all you wish, in that respect, be past a doubt correct; still it is a step pregnant with future mischief to yourself, to admit this beautiful Agnes as your inmate. Suppose worldly conjecture confirmed, and that your fortune throws the balance eventually into your scale; still the attention of men will be distracted; and, like the butterfly,

many will range from flower to flower, uncertain where to fix ; while time, I again warn you, must not be suffered longer to wing his way, ere you secure an establishment, such as I have hitherto vainly urged your attention to."

This was a luckless moment to enforce the necessity for an observance of this long-pressed subject. The disappointed girl, checked in the full career of her thoughtless projects, was not inclined to coalesce with him who had overthrown her air-built fabric for the new *protégée* ; but all her eloquence was expended to no effect ; not even a compromise, hitherto her certain mode of overcoming difficulties, was met with accustomed cheerfulness. Mr. Vincent was invincible ; and his mortified daughter was compelled to retract her so recently-formed engagement.

Again and again, however, did he urge, in strongest language, the folly of a compliance with her desire ; for, with all his  
parental

parental partiality, he could not but admit, that the uncommon beauty of Agnes would eclipse the charms of Florence: though the former certainly did not boast those fascinations of manner which were so conspicuous in the latter, still there was a touching softness in the one, which might, at times, have been even preferred to the unbounded vivacity of his lovely girl. Each, therefore, parted ill-satisfied with the other; for this check upon her wishes inclined Florence to pronounce her father arbitrary; while her perfect reliance upon the infallibility of her own opinion, led him to the belief that she, probably, oftener erred than his partial judgment had hitherto supposed.

Our heroine now sought, with unwilling step, the Portuguese, and with as much tenderness and delicacy as her strong sensibility dictated, touched upon the expediency of a removal to the protection of her mother's friend, Henrietta d'Estrade; while she was made to comprehend, that



the expence of her journey would be readily defrayed, and a direction given to the house of lord Shirley, in London, where she would certainly receive positive intelligence of the present residence of his nephew's bride.

But in her acknowledgments of past hospitality, and intended bounty, the blushing cheeks of Agnes, her embarrassed manner, her tremulous voice, operated differently upon the feelings of her present entertainers. In the eyes of the cautious Mr. Vincent, they bore an equivocal appearance ; disappointment was indeed legibly written—but from what cause did this arise ? while the one was ready to ascribe it to the overthrow of certain schemes hidden beneath plausible ostensibilities, the other only read conscious innocence, wounded by apparent suspicion, and an independent mind, bowed by unmerited misfortune to the acceptance of obligation from the hand of benevolence.

Which of these casuists were right, we  
now

now leave to the decision of the reader; and proceed to an event of more immediate moment; this was, a servant delivering into the hands of Florence, at a time so inauspicious, the following letter from major Bentinck.

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“SUSPENSE is, I believe, allowed by all, to be the most painful point on which the human mind can hang; and, if this axiom be admitted, surely, my beloved Florence, I have exhibited no common portion of a virtue, which, except in regard to you, has never been numbered among those I claim: but where the heart is deeply interested, minor considerations subside, or become annihilated altogether. The lover who is as devoted as I am, cannot but view with apprehensive dread, the procrastinated fiat on which every earthly hope rests! but, while I acknowledge an unbounded attachment, which breathes through every fibre of my

G 6

heart,

heart, that proud heart would spurn the conviction that it had been held in thralldom by the refinements of coquetry; and regain eventual emancipation, if treated with unmerited neglect. The chord of love can be distended but to a certain verge; mine now approaches that aventful point; it throbs with ardour to hear an avowed reciprocity of affection, or to burst its fetters, if satisfied they have been imposed without the wish of an exchange.

“ This candid statement will not, my well-beloved, injure me in your regard, if our minds coalesce. You have hitherto indulged a playful vivacity, at a vast expence to my peace; but, perhaps, you have only unconsciously trifled: now, then, is the crisis of my fate; you are assured of your empire, and you are satisfied of its existence; be equally candid on your part, and allow of that reference I have so often pressed, to him whose affirmative to my hoped-for bond of happiness I would now secure. I will not affect to believe

believe you indifferent to my affections, for by actions alone can we judge; and your permissive acquiescence in my apparent devotion, held that anchor which has supported me. On this, therefore, I lean at this important moment; and, with anxiety I need not paint, I wait your decision.

“HORACE BENTINCK.”

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The haughty tone which usually pervaded the mind of the beautiful Florence, rose to repel the manly and candid appeal of Bentinck. She had been so accustomed to submission, unconditional submission, from the herd of past admirers, and still more from himself, that she regarded, with encreasing astonishment, this suddenly resolute and independent declaration of Horace. She felt a consciousness of having unwarrantably trifled with his peace; and, ashamed of her own conduct, she was inclined to visit its effects, however unjustly,

unjustly, on the object who had set her at variance with her own good opinion. She felt also satisfied, that those chains, whose weight, when found too intolerable, he had fancied he could at will disencumber himself from, were too securely fettered by her attractions to be discarded; and, enjoying an ideal triumph over the *rational* lover, she lost no time in the attempt to realize it; indulging, therefore, her usual prompt and ill-judged measures, she flew to her desk, and returned the following answer.

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“ That a man of fashion, a man of the world, such as major Bentinck, could have so much mistaken the manners of a simple girl like myself, has not a little astonished me ! *badinage* is allowable, nay more, I believe it is considered as a natural appendage of youth; and if a display of this folly, so usual at my age, should have been misconstrued into preference, into a sanction of attentions

I have

I have received but as a matter of course, I can only regret the mistake, and lament a delusion, whose consequences, however, it ought to afford me happiness to find, are not likely to be permanent, or so serious, as but for the candid avowal which follows, I might have been led to dread, would have clouded at least some months of a life which I am now taught to believe will so soon regain its habitual tranquil temperament.

“In the expectation of speedily witnessing the fruition of this prediction, I remain, with many acknowledgments for the honour of major Bentinck’s distinction, his

“Obliged and obedient servant,

“FLORENCE VINCENT.”

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Within an hour after its receipt, the answer to the major’s letter reached its destination. Vain would be our attempts to paint the rage, the astonishment, the indignation of the ill-treated lover! Amid  
the



the war of passions, we fear he almost forgot, in the flow of vindictives against the sex, that Florence alone had laughed at his professions—that Florence alone had observed the burst of indignation, to which her sarcastic and coquettish reply had given birth. His carriage was immediately ordered, and his cards of adieu in the neighbourhood having announced his immediate exit, he quitted, without delay, the scene of his disappointment.

The inconsiderate Florence, in the interim, self-satisfied with the imagined triumph of coquetry, sought her foreign *protégée*, and assisted her in the arrangements for returning to town, where she doubted not her either finding Mrs. Maitland, or receiving an accurate direction to her present residence, wherever it might be, from an inquiry at the house of lord Shirley, whom she knew to be then in the metropolis. The liberality of our heroine would have been extended far beyond the necessity of the case, if Miss Dursley  
would

would have permitted its display ; but, as she positively refused to accept more than would actually defray the expence attendant on her journey back to her kind friend, Mrs. Mills, she saw the poor orphan take her departure for London, at an early hour of the same day fixed for the termination of the visit of her friends, the Dacres.

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## CHAP. VIII.

'Tis granted, and no plainer truth appears,  
 Our most important are our *earliest* years ;  
 The mind, impressible and soft, with ease  
 Imbibes and copies what she hears and sees,  
 And through life's labyrinth holds fast the clue  
 That education gives her, false or true.

COWPER.

.....

The tear was upon her cheek, the sigh rose in secret in her  
 bosom.

OSSEIAN.

### *Repentance, or the foiled Coquette.*

BUT, alas ! the vanity of Florence was fated to meet with a disappointment, severe as unexpected, in learning the intelligence of the major's having quitted Litchfield, without one attempt to see her, or further effort to interest her attention.

There

There was something in this sudden and ready acceptance of her renunciation, that argued no persevering devoted lover, at least, not such a one as her imagination had pictured. Wounded pride, and piqued resentment, flushed the cheeks of our heroine, at the mortifying result of her recent conduct; but discontent, even to saddened regret, sat heavy at her heart, as the coquette trembled on her throne of beauty; nay, we almost doubt, if at this epoch, the voices of an admiring crowd of lovers would have sounded half so gratefully on the ear of this child of folly, as the renewed offering of that *one* heart, which had been so recently rejected, with all the affected dalliance of capricious despotic woman.

The cause of major Bentinck's absence was, however, soon divined among the officers of his regiment; and general report yielded to Miss Vincent all the *eclat* of having refused the handsome, the elegant, and hitherto irresistible Bentinck!

The

The brow of the father gathered into an angry frown, as, upon inquiry of his daughter, he found this to have been actually the case; for the very apparent neglect of lord Leslie at the ball, a few evenings before, and his having quitted Staffordshire professedly without any intention to return for many months, had wholly extinguished his hopes and views, as directed towards this young nobleman; and had been the means of again turning his thoughts towards Horace, whose present fortune, and future expectations, he had found, on further investigation, to be even considerably larger than he had at first imagined. He would, therefore, at this period, have been accepted as a son-in-law, with perfect satisfaction, if not with avidity.

Florence and her father were, at this period, left *tête-à-tête* at the Abbey, their visitors having quitted them the last week in November; and a heavy fall of snow now rendered the roads so impassable, that  
all

all society in the neighbourhood was impracticable.

Alike dissatisfied with her lover's conduct and her own, Florence would fain have persuaded herself, that the truant had become wholly indifferent to her, and that the present sorrowing emotion she felt at his desertion was that of piqued vanity, rather than any more serious disappointment of the heart; but yet, amid all her follies and caprices, our heroine still possessed both feelings and affections, that were tainted, but not destroyed, by the ruling errors of her disposition; and her bosom now heaved the frequent sigh of doubt, apprehension, and even distress, as she reflected, that it was possible Bentinck had indeed accomplished his release, and cast from him those chains she had vainly believed were composed of magic, unyielding metal.

Mr. Vincent was reserved, gloomy, and almost morose; the domestic solitude in which he had been unwillingly imprisoned  
for



for some days, rendered him fretful, impatient, and irksomely dull: twice when playing backgammon with his daughter, he had abruptly risen in the midst of the game, as if wholly abstracted from the amusement, and paced the room with hurried uneven steps; while, if Florence attempted an inquiry into the cause of his evident distress, it was only answered by a lecture on her disobedience, and unexampled folly, in not having secured a matrimonial establishment; while her smiling plea of youth, and disinclination to assume as yet the matronly character, was answered with angry frowns, and sometimes even bitter reproaches.

Thus passed five more tedious days, in which even the customary receipt of letters had been retarded by the heaviness of the roads; but on the sixth, smiling Nature gradually began to throw off her bridal garb of purest white, and the trees to cast from their leafless branches their finely powdered livery of snow; while, in ano-

ther day, Thomas the post-boy arrived, with his long-expected bag of letters.

Florence was on the lawn, perhaps not quite accidentally, when he stopt at the lodge; but in vain her extended hand proclaimed eager expectation of the receipt of one letter, at least; Thomas had none to deliver, except to Mr. Vincent; and this circumstance first awakened Florence to the full force of that latent hope, which had connected itself with a possibility of still hearing from Bentinck.

She suddenly re-entered the house, and, as if fearing to hold communion with her own heart, hastily repaired to a piano-forte, and began one of the wildest, loudest-toned productions of Wolfe, as if to drown, in this forte key, the trembling and tender yielding feelings of her bosom: she then attempted to sing a light ludicrous ballad; but all would not do—tears impeded her voice; they gushed forth, as with sudden force, that disdained further suppression; and while her handkerchief

was

was busily employed in effacing from her eyes the soft pathetic tributes of irrepressible affection, springing even from the heart of a coquette, those eyes, from which flowed this retributive offering to the merciless Baphian, were rivetted on that very lute which had once been designated by Bentinck as alike the instrument of love and reconciliation.

Every event of that morning recurred with minuteness to her mind; and with these remembrances, Leslie arose to her recollection also. Ah! how far can the elastic chain of memory distend! for linked idea roamed yet further, and gave the parting adieu, and admonition of this friend of Bentinck, the singular expression of his countenance, the touching eloquence of his manner, and his last impressive look, when he concluded his address to her heart, her feelings, and her reason. All struck to her bosom, as the air-drawn dagger of the chieftain, which conscience pointed to his restless breast.

She

She remembered, acutely remembered, the saddened melancholy, that closing gaze, which spoke a volume of tender interest, had resistlessly diffused over her mind; and—"Would to Heaven it had been permanent in its effects!"—burst from her lips, with an energy that astonished even herself.

"Florence, Florence!" at this moment was repeated by the voice of Mr. Vincent, as he ascended the stairs, evidently in search of his daughter; and the pensive meditator had not time to avoid him, as her wishes would have prompted, ere he had opened the door of the music-room; but the cloud of mingled discontent and ill-humour which reigned triumphant at their parting, had now vanished from his brow, and he altogether appeared in the best possible spirits, as he advanced towards his yet weeping child, whose tearful countenance he did not appear to remark, until he was quite near her, so fully was he engaged by his own pleasing reflections;

flections ; but on observing those now-evident traces of sorrow, he checked his first-commenced address, and taking a seat by her, affectionately kissed her cheek, as he kindly assured her he was quite concerned his sullenness towards her, or reproaches vented on her folly, at the breakfast-table that morning, should have so deeply affected her. Indeed, had he thought that she had felt sufficient interest for his good opinion, to shed tears at his anger and resentment, he would have been less harsh and unkind ; but that he really had began to imagine her almost callous to every filial duty or affection, or, at best, too volatile to suffer uneasiness from their effect on him. Now, however, having discovered her so sensitively alive to paternal remonstrance and rebuke, he was inclined to forget the past, if she would be only more tractable and considerate in future ; for he, at this moment, had indeed proof she sincerely loved him, or his coldness and severity could not have been productive

ductive of such sorrow as he had witnessed by his unexpected entrance.

The pallid cheeks of Florence blushed their deepest dye, as she reflected on the erroneous construction her father had given those recent tears, which had flowed from so bitter a channel—tears that arose certainly not from the filial tenderness of a penitent child; and as her father pressed her in his arms with an affectionate warmth, such as he had seldom before evinced, her native candour arose; she felt the cruel consciousness of unmerited kindness, while resting her head on his shoulder; and painfully sensible that this mistaken praise was the most severe chastisement she could have received, she sobbed forth some accents of self-condemnation, that innocently, as well as unintentionally, confirmed Mr. Vincent in his original error, and he now affectionately answered—“ Well, my dear girl, we will say nothing more of this; I see your contrition is as great and sincere as I could desire; indeed, I have



forgotten your inconsiderate folly, and am anxious that you also efface it from your memory. Banish this air of penitence, my child, and let us bid adieu to tears; for your sorrow will render me as unhappy as your former levity had done."

The heart of Florence was subdued; her lips unclosed to offer a full confession of the real source of her sorrow, for hypocrisy formed no feature of her character, when her father, evidently wishing to erase the remembrance of their recent conversation, suddenly exclaimed—"You look very like your mother at this moment, Florence;" and in a yet softer tone he echoed the sentence, as she raised her head from his shoulder; and he parted the ringlets on her forehead, as if seeking a far greater similitude in its polished form.

Yes, Vincent then thought of the farewell of the lover, when, believing himself the brother of lady Emily Walsham, he had witnessed that tearful-subduing tremor  
his

his incoherent expressions of a fatally impelled desertion had occasioned.

“ You loved your mother, Florence,” he subjoined, after a pause of memory ; “ so did I once ; and while I loved, I was happy ! and had the temper of either been more accommodating or yielding, we might have lived much longer together than we did ; but Emily expected the same weak, blind indulgence from the husband, as the lover had evinced ; and this, even your experience of life must convince you, was a wild, chimerical, and unreasonable wish. You have condemned me, perhaps, my child, for having so often pressed your marrying, from political and prudential motives alone ; but I do so from the perfect conviction of the general instability of attachments in men ; and I think the irksome vacuum which succeeds exhausted affection, is far more painful, from the contrast of those evanescent joys which result from the blind devotion of a warm and fervid heart, than if we had never

experienced any but the common placidity of apathetic indifference! for as long as Love has wings, surely the truant had better never be wedded to the heart, since he is no permanent inmate; and the transient guest will then make us dearly feel, and poignantly regret, his absence, if we have ever cherished and cultivated his society."

There was a serious tenderness in the manner of Mr. Vincent, which forcibly rivetted the attention of his daughter. His sentiments in regard to love and matrimony were such as might be supposed natural to a man who judged his fellow-creatures by himself, and had found his own heart incapable of a constant, devoted affection, permanent in its duration; one to whom marriage had been the death of all that fervid glowing passion which had been excited by the youth, beauty, and accomplishments of his Emily; who, if she had not long been the object of a husband's idolatry, had, at least, not owed his

his loss to the rivalry of a more successful mistress; for however, as a man of gallantry, he was the admirer of each passing belle, he never became the sincerely-attached lover of any other than the bride of his early choice; and when indifference to her had eventually succeeded to his conubial fetters, his whole soul had descended to the enthrallments of those irrational pursuits connected with the turf, the billiard-room, or the hazard-table.

But to return to the paternal dialogue.

Mr. Vincent again resumed—"I have wandered strangely from the subject which brought me to seek you, and this was, to convey the information of my having determined to pass the winter months in London. I had previously entertained some intentions of the kind, but a letter received this morning from lady Fitz-Arnold has decided me."

"The health of my aunt is improved,

H 4

I hope?"

I hope?" said Florence, with undisguised interest.

"Yes, she speaks of it as, if not quite reinstated, at least amended; and says, it would have been sufficiently recruited to have enabled her even to undertake so long a journey as a visit to Trent Abbey, if the season of the year had not been inimical to her wishes; but since this is the case, she is desirous you should pass a part of the winter, at least, with her in town. I, however, prefer accompanying you there myself, as a more advisable course to pursue, than your being a visitor under the roof of her ladyship; since I fear your prudence will not be sufficiently on the alert, to render that constant accommodating deference to the peculiarities of lady Fitz-Arnold, which she would exact as a matter of course, and when omission would, most probably, effectually mar your future prospects from that quarter; still I deem it quite as impolitic to refuse altogether

gether a compliance with the wishes of your aunt ; and therefore have resolved to compromise the matter, by our both visiting London this winter ; and shall, by the next post, write to my agent in town, to have a ready-furnished house engaged for those months, in the vicinity of Albemarle-street ; and I hope, my dear Florence, you will be prepared to meet lady Fitz-Arnold with that affectionate respect due to her age, and relative connexion."

" I have always, my dear sir, felt a sincere regard for my aunt ; nor have I ever forgotten her tenderness towards me, evinced in early childhood, when I was seized with a putrid fever of the most alarming nature, and she suffered me to be removed to her villa in Kent for change of air, when, fearless of danger, she herself became my nurse, at a time when—"

Florence paused ; she was involuntarily going to add—her mother was afraid to see or approach her ; but she recollected that, for three years preceding her death,



lady Emily Vincent had been both maternally kind and attentive; she therefore upbraided herself for this involuntary reference to former neglect, although excited by a just gratitude to the more tender solicitude of a comparatively distant relation: and it was the fear of her attention and professions of regard being misconstrued, as originating in mercenary interested motives, which had alone induced Florence to neglect writing to a friend whom her heart gratefully acknowledged, and whose affection memory yet tenaciously treasured.

Mr. Vincent justly interpreted the close of his daughter's speech; nor could he dare condemn that negligent conduct in a mother, which, as a father, he had himself pursued; for he was aware that Florence, in her childhood, had been entirely unnoticed by himself; nay, her very existence at times seemed forgotten; and a painful consciousness of the total indifference he had evinced to her education, or early pursuits,

pursuits, made him now tolerate more of her faults, than he otherwise would have been likely to have done, from feeling he had no right to condemn those inconsistencies, follies, or waywardness of disposition, which had, perhaps, never existed, if parental influence had been exerted to direct her youthful mind. Mr. Vincent, however, never would suffer his ideas to rest long on a painful subject; and he therefore soon changed the theme, to that of his satisfaction at the very favourable, and even affectionate manner, in which lady Fitz-Arnold had mentioned her niece.

In fact, her ladyship had not seen Florence since the first winter of her early initiation into society, when the naturally amiable feelings of an unsophisticated heart were strikingly predominant, and her ever gay and thoughtless flow of spirits had not been tainted by that pernicious personal vanity, and anxiety for general admiration, which time had matured rather

than corrected. But how fatal were the effects of three successive years of dissipation, passed beneath the auspices of a vain indulgent mother, who cared not at what expence to the more estimable, endearing qualities of her child, her own maternal pride was gratified, by that daughter becoming an idol of celebrity in the London world of her sphere ! and lady Emily well knew, it was not the modest retiring virtues that would, in such a region, deck her with triumphant attractions. Her ladyship possessed that truly worldly understanding, which teaches, that a moderately handsome face and pleasing form, aided by *management*, is far more certain in its range of conquests, than that unaffected simplicity of perfect beauty, which exists a novice in the alluring arts.

Rochefoucault was a favourite author of lady Emily, and his *Maxims* were even a toilette appendage ; she had interlined many with her own remarks of coalescing tendency, and, in particular, had pencilled  
beneath

beneath that fearful axiom which maintains—"To woman, youth without beauty is of as little consequence as beauty without youth!"—" *Just as impotent and unavailing is beauty without coquetry.*"

If such then was the *theory* of the mother, can we wonder at the *practice* of the daughter?

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## CHAP. IX.

In the original, love is one and the same; but there are a thousand different copies. ROCHEFOUCAULT.

.....

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,  
 Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.  
 In ev'ry work regard the writer's end,  
 Since none can compass more than they intend. POPE.

*Lady Fitz-Arnold.*

MR. Vincent having entered more fully into the subject of the proposed journey to London, which was appointed to take place the beginning of the following week, left his daughter for the morning to pursue her solitary amusements: but his presence, his unexpected intelligence, and sudden kindness,

kindness, had, for a time, destroyed the chain of idea connected with Bentinck. The sentiment delivered by her father, in regard to the instability of attachments, particularly among men, was also one of dangerous tendency at this moment, to the cause of Horace in the heart of Florence, which had almost resigned itself to the despairing tendency of fond devoted love, had not the timely warning of Mr. Vincent rather served to sanction and justify her recent conduct, in not yielding herself quiescently to the wishes of Bentinck, from an apprehension, that while burthening herself with the chains of matrimony, she should only have then released Horace from those of love ! and Florence breathed a discontented sigh at her own disturbed feelings, as she was well convinced that he could be by her better endured as the truant lover, than the inconstant husband. At all events, however, this journey to London was most desirable ; and, in quitting those scenes where he had been  
the



the principal hero, for others where she hoped he would have rivals to her favour, she certainly did not despair of conquering this new-born love, which would have been to her breast rather an obtrusive than welcome guest, under any circumstances.

Indeed, that lingering tenderness, that penitent regret, which had succeeded to the consequences of her coquetry, in a mind haughty and independent as that of Bentinck, was so entirely novel to the breast of our heroine, that she scarcely could recognize her own heart under its new government; and actually spent the remaining time passed at the Abbey in wondering how, under such circumstances of continued neglect, and now-obvious disregard, she could still love the arrogant rebellious Horace!

Ere her departure from Staffordshire, Florence took an affectionate leave of Mrs. Bertie, and regretted to learn, that her daughter was not expected home till the week after that appointed for the departure

ture of the Vincents, having proceeded with her friends from Brighton to Bath.

With all the humane and charitable feelings of a disposition ever alive to the distresses of the indigent and reduced unfortunates the extensive estate of Trent often produced, as objects for benevolence, our heroine left particular directions with the worthy Hanson, who had often been her almoner on these occasions, to apply to her immediately, if, during her absence, there should appear any real objects for charity unassisted; and, moreover, gave her a strict charge to see that proper attention was paid to two poor little orphan children, she had some months before rescued from the dreadful and idle pursuit of beggary, and placed beneath the roof of an industrious farmer, to whom she monthly paid, out of her own card-purse, a liberal stipend for board, lodging, and such plain education as his wife willingly agreed to communicate.

Nothing material occurred during the journey,

journey, excepting one paragraph in a London newspaper, which met the hands of Florence at an inn on the road, where they stopped the second stage for refreshment; and this bearing marked allusion to the mysterious bride of her no less mysterious cousin, was couched in the following terms:

“We learn from the Dublin papers, that the foreign wife of the English hope of the house of S——y, has become an object of general attention in Ireland’s gay metropolis, where the splendour of her establishment, and the sumptuous magnificence of her entertainments, are singularly contrasted by the gloomy reserve, and taciturn deportment, of the female president, who appears an almost widowed wife, in the first era of bridal life, and reigns supreme, and undisturbed by her husband’s society, in her splendid and pleasure-breathing mansion.”

This paragraph naturally drew the thoughts of Florence to Agnes Dursley, for whose silence the information of Mrs. Maitland being in Ireland sufficiently accounted. She  
doubted

doubted not her having obtained from lord Shirley a direction to this friend of her late aunt; and having, in consequence, immediately bent her course to Dublin, from whence she might now soon expect to hear from her, the success of her purposed application to the enigmatical Henrietta.

The day after Mr. Vincent became established in his temporary house in town, he, at the breakfast-table, requested our heroine to be in readiness, within two hours, to accompany him in a visit to lady Fitz-Arnold; at the same time earnestly enjoining her to assume a more serious and thoughtful deportment, before her ladyship, than was her usual habit; since he knew there was nothing she so much held in abhorrence, as that fashionable frivolity, and idle trifling, which distinguished the young women of our era, and of none more than his present auditor.

But Florence, the wayward Florence, smiled at the prudent advice, and assured her father, that if she attempted to display  
the

the wise and staid formality of her good aunt's day, she should but caricature the part, and give her ladyship just cause to imagine she was amusing herself with a burlesque imitation; for that with her, a grave sedate habit would, in truth, be but a masquerade-covert, whose texture would not outlive a few fleeting hours, and must eventually leave her exposed in original costume.

Mr. Vincent saw admonition and remonstrance were alike ineffectual; yet, withal, he could not condemn that sincerity of heart, which rendered his daughter ever averse to the slightest auxiliary from that affected demeanour, which could, with her, have owed its birth only to the most consummate deception; for even her coquetry was spontaneous, and never descended to systematic art; she laid no plans to ensnare a conquest, but she could not avoid playing with the net of triumphant beauty, when the unguarded had become voluntarily entangled in its web.

Clad in a dress, not of a former century,  
but

but of some thirty years since, when widow's weeds were, perhaps, less becoming, but certainly more appropriate, lady Fitz-Arnold appeared precisely the same as when our heroine had last seen her ; for she despised all the varieties of Fashion, and pitied her proselytes, as she beheld them yield obedience to her fantastic vagaries. Her tall and stately form, that even age could not bend, stood like some fine pillar of antiquity, that excites veneration, rather from its aged memorial of past times, than admiration from present beauty. Her thin and sunken cheeks had rendered her features strikingly prominent ; while an expression of austere forbidding virtue, produced an altogether repellant, yet impressive countenance ; and when she conversed, which was not often, it was in the slow but elevated tone of one who demanded attention as a rightful tythe, due to her age and rank. She never condescended to argue on the frivolities and absurdities of a younger generation, but a cold and freezing look marked that

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that disdainful contempt she felt for passing folly.

She required all the formula of respect, she exacted all the profound etiquette of submissive deference. ♦The confident familiarity, the easy assurance of a St. James's lounge, or the pert effrontery of a voluble modern belle, absolutely shocked and deranged her to no inconsiderable degree; for she could sooner forget an injury than a slight—an injustice than a personal disrespect. This tenacity was carried to an extreme, even reprehensibly absurd; but, throughout all the stages of life, when shall we find one untainted by folly of some description, amid THE INHABITANTS OF EARTH? The consequence of this fell severely on herself; for few would pay that humiliating deference, to secure the friendship and distinction of an individual, whose appearance and general manner promised no meet recompence for the pains and attention necessary to attain it: but yet, lady Fitz-Arnold had, in reality, a breast formed for

warm affections, and enthusiastic love. In her life she had evinced the possession of acute and tender feelings; but deep domestic affliction had overshadowed her mind with gloom; and, wrapt in her own sorrowful retrospections, she turned displeased from the laugh of idle revelry, or the riotous pleasures of a world, where for her the spectres of past joys alone flitted across her sight, and rendered it but a hateful tomb, that confined her spirit from reunion with those whose untimely loss her heart had so long mourned.

Such was the great-aunt of our heroine, who had been some years since an uncommon favourite with this singular old lady, who had witnessed many traits of feeling, and artless affection, in her infantine actions, which had been highly estimated by lady Fitz-Arnold, whose partialities and aversions were equally vivid; but if once the latter became engendered, they were implacable and unconquerable. Formerly having been accustomed to view Florence Vincent quite  
a child,

a child, her gay volatility, and thoughtless careless manner, had not been considered in any serious light ; but it was, however, no longer as a child, but as a woman, that our heroine had now to appear before lady Fitz-Arnold.

The first interview passed with more success than might have been reasonably expected, from the contrasted characters that were to meet ; but, in fact, the spirits of poor Florence had, almost imperceptibly to herself, known a great diminution since the last act of folly, which had severed the chord of her own happiness ! Yet she could not endure to allow herself this truth ; and she had even began to persuade her heart, that from the present conduct of Bentinck, it was evident, had she accepted him, his attachment was not of that devoted nature, which would have recompensed her for the bartered blessing of dear independent liberty ; while the sacrifices she must have, in that case, made him, were far greater than his affection merited : for Florence, like a  
very

very woman, was ready to subscribe to those animated verses of our English poetess, when she thus sportively describes the marks of true passion :—

“ It is to be all bath’d in tears ;  
To live upon a smile for years ;  
To live whole ages at a beauty’s feet :  
To kneel, to languish, and implore ;  
And still, tho’ she disdain, adore ;  
It is to do all this, and think thy sufferings sweet !

It is to gaze upon her eyes  
With eager joy and fond surprise ;  
Yet temper’d with such chaste and awful fear,  
As wretches feel who wait their doom :  
Nor must one ruder thought presume,  
Tho’ but in whispers breath’d, to meet her ear.”

Florence soon began to discern the true motive which had prompted the London journey of Mr. Vincent ; and this did not merely relate to lady Fitz-Arnold, but was connected with a young man of the name of Elliot, who had been a ward of her ladyship’s son ; and, on the decease of the latter, had become almost an adopted child of her

own. This gentleman had been one of the first lovers of Florence, who numbered him amid her earliest triumphs of gratified vanity. At the time when he commenced to breathe forth those soft and peculiar accents, so dear to the novice in love's enchanting language, the blooming and then *naïve* Florence was scarcely fifteen; but we must shelter his partiality beneath the maxim of St. Pierre, that "contrast is the parent of love," sanctioned by observations of life, and its inconsistencies; or else we might become accused of the improbable, in supposing that the volatile, giddy, laughing Florence, could have gained the affections, or even attracted the attention, of the studious, reflective, and retiring Elliot, whose deportment was tinged by that *mauvaise-honte* so painful both to the possessor and the feeling observer.

From the failure of necessary confidence, and a little of the accommodating elegancies of worldly address, Elliot found himself in society so oppressed by awkward embarrassment,

nessment, that retirement was an asylum of comfort and ease, to which he ever joyfully retreated, when the necessary visits of ceremony to his gayer friends in the metropolis were completed, and he was allowed leisure to indulge his own sedentary inclinations.

This excess of personal diffidence, and a consciousness of deficiency in all the Chesterfieldian requisites to please, caused the bashful Elliot to nurse his love, for many a tedious month, in silent tenderness; but, at length, it surmounted all counteracting obstacles, and gave interesting, even pleading eloquence, to an ungraceful orator: but for the light *badinage*, the playful retort, and the ludicrous sally, which a coquette knows so well to apply in matters of this nature, Elliot was wholly unprepared. He had no address, nor worldly policy, with which to combat these; and his genuine professions were soon wholly silenced by the raillery of his lovely youthful mistress, who but too evidently intended only to amuse



herself with him she styled her classical lover, who certainly made love by mathematical rule, and measured out each woe-worn sentence with geometrical precision!

Florence, in again meeting him, after a separation of some years, soon perceived her former empire remained undiminished; and that, supported by the very evident sanction of lady Fitz-Arnold, and the palpable encouragement of her father, young Elliot began to entertain more sanguine hope than his unassuming diffident disposition and habits would have otherwise allowed him to engender. Our heroine herself, for a short time, contributed to heighten the newly-raised expectations of this truly excellent young man. Yet the influence of Bentinck over her heart was visible even here; for when a coquette is instigated to revenge, her never-failing auxiliary is the impoisoned weapon of jealousy; and, if this were powerless to affect the heart of Horace, Florence sufficiently knew his disposition to be convinced, that it would as-  
sail

sail his proud and lofty soul in the most tender point; for let a man address a woman from what motive he may, the idea of being rivalled is always galling to his self-love.

About three weeks after the arrival of the Vincents in London, our heroine unexpectedly met lord Leslie at an evening party; and, immediately on his recognizing her, he advanced towards where she was sitting. But on his approach, Florence coloured, even painfully, and she could, at that instant, have encountered Bentinck with far less confusion than his friend, whose clear perception, and acute judgment, unblinded by passion, awed her follies, while she felt them thus openly exposed to the view of one she admired and regarded too highly, for his favourable opinion to be wholly indifferent to her. His manner was courteous as ever, but he appeared to converse with her merely as an intimate acquaintance, and not with that familiar air of marked friendship, and

1 3                      distinguished

distinguished interest, with which he had been wont to address her in Staffordshire.

Without knowing whether she most hoped or feared it, Florence remained in momentary expectation that Leslie might, in some shape or other, revert to Bentinck; since, in their last conversation, he had entered confidentially on the subject of his attachment to her. This impression caused considerable agitation to the bosom of our heroine; and never had she been sensible of more embarrassment, than the half hour's *tête-à-tête* conversation with his lordship; nor could an uninterested spectator have imagined that the most trifling topics were alone discussed between them.

At the first minute of Leslie's quitting her, Miss Vincent accepted his absence as a relief; but at the next, regret stole over her mind, and tinged it with that softened tenderness which his conversation, the expression of his countenance, and the peculiar tone of his voice, when he individually addressed

addressed her, had latterly often produced; for his presence always had the influence of mellowing her follies, by awakening an interest in her breast, for his favourable estimation of herself.

Elliot had eagerly taken the seat vacated by the removal of his lordship, and began to expatiate, in very classical language, on the subject represented in one of the beautiful pannelled paintings, which, alternately with glass, were ranged round the room; but the mind of Florence was abstracted; yet her silence, so different from her usually playful air of vivacity, or satirical illustration of his seriously profound observations, was now misconstrued by the mistaken lover into flattering attention; and elated by this idea, he became yet more earnest in his theme.

The blushes of our heroine at the first view of lord Leslie had died away, and unusual paleness overspread her generally blooming countenance, as her eyes were bent on the carpet, while the pulse of her

heart no longer beat, as heretofore, gaily, quick, and lightly happy, for its slow and mournful vibrations now subdued her almost to tears.

She was, however, soon aroused to recollection of the passing scene, by some accidental movement near her; and raising her eyes, she beheld—not lord Leslie, but his father, leaning against the back of a chair nearly opposite to her, and attentively surveying her countenance, with a melancholy dejection that far exceeded her own; a sigh, in which feeling seemed to breathe its deepest note of suffering, issued from his lips, with a peculiar and eloquent expression of countenance, as, bending his head over the chair, he appeared to resign himself to the most torturing reflection.

At this instant, Florence felt her arm grasped by an almost convulsed hand! she turned, and discovered lady Fitz-Arnold at her side, her features teeming with the most marked and harrowing expression; for remorse, even to anguish, was engraven there—  
on,

on, as, leaning across our heroine, she addressed her companion Elliot—"My carriage—for God's sake see if it be arrived!"

The young man started up; he attempted, with much genuine interest, an inquiry if her ladyship were ill? but he received no other answer, than a renewed request that he would see for her carriage instantly; and then sinking into the seat from which the astonished and alarmed Florence had risen, she appeared anxious to regain some command over her present evidently painful feelings, and to suppress that full extent of mingled horror and affliction, which had the moment before so forcibly struck her young relation.

As Mr. Vincent was not one of this evening's party, it had been previously agreed upon, that lady Fitz-Arnold should take charge of his daughter home; and her chariot being almost immediately pronounced in readiness, the unfortunate dowager, leaning on the arms of each of her young friends, and apparently hardly able to sus-



tain her own weight, with difficulty reached it, so much had agitation increased the infirmities of age. Seated in the carriage, lady Fitz-Arnold rested her head on the shoulder of the compassionating Florence; and as the full glare of the lamps fell upon her face, she beheld tears streaming down her furrowed cheeks!

There is something almost sacred in the sorrows of the aged, let their source arise from what it may; and most deeply did the emotion of the venerable sufferer affect the hearts of her amiable companions, as, in all the silence of respectful commiseration, they supported her agitated and feeble frame.

When they stopt at the house of Mr. Vincent, Florence vainly entreated lady Fitz-Arnold to allow it at once to proceed to Albemarle-street, and suffer her to remain there that night—"No, no!" returned her ladyship, in that decided tone which never admitted opposition; "your presence, my love, would rather heighten than sooth my  
agitated

agitated harassed spirits! To-morrow I will see you; but now, leave me, for I shall more readily regain composure, if you are absent, than if present."

## CHAP. X.

Fancy has sported all her pow'rs away  
In tales, in trifles, and in children's play ;  
And 'tis the sad complaint, and almost true,  
Whate'er we write, we bring forth little new. COWPER.

*The ambitious Mother.*

ON her toilette Florence found a letter awaiting her return ; it was from Miss Bertie, and written in a strain of more vivacity than our heroine could have conceived Ellen really felt : she had returned to Staffordshire ; but both her mother and herself were now on the eve of bidding a long adieu to that county, as the brother of the former had been recently appointed to a civil employ in Guernsey ; and, in compliance with his wishes

wishes to see them, they had accepted a very pressing invitation to become his guests for at least the six successive months; and they had, therefore, began to make immediate preparations for leaving home, as they had but little expectation of being permitted to quit their relative at the period agreed upon for separation; nor, in fact, was either of the party particularly anxious that it should be so; for the society of Mrs. and Miss Bertie was a considerable acquisition anywhere, and by no one were they more highly appreciated than by their intended host. Of major Bentinck the letter said not one word, although it mentioned a ball Miss Bertie had attended a few evenings previous, given by the field-officers of the garrison of Litchfield; but as Horace was not reverted to among them, Florence concluded he was still absent from his regiment.

With a mind occupied alternately by Bentinck and Leslie, lord Trelawney, and lady Fitz-Arnold, it was not possible that sleep could attend her pillow, nor improbable that she

she should rise at an early hour the next morning; and having taken breakfast in her dressing-room, long before the rising of Mr. Vincent, she ordered a chair, and proceeded at once to Albemarle-street.

On arriving, she desired to see the house-keeper of lady Fitz-Arnold, as she feared it was yet too early to obtrude on her ladyship herself, but wished to hear particularly how she had passed the night. Her inquiries from this quarter, however, were superseded by the appearance of Elliot, who informed her, that lady Fitz-Arnold had not yet rang her bell, as customary upon her first awaking, before which no one was allowed to enter her room; but as it was now rather past her usual hour of rising, if Florence could remain a short time, he doubted not her seeing the invalid.

Our fair visitor consented to this arrangement, and preceded Elliot to the breakfast-room; each appeared abstracted, but from different causes; the former by vain endeavour to trace the source of lady Fitz-Arnold's

Arnold's indisposition, which had evidently arisen from some event of the last evening; and the latter from the wish to take advantage of the present propitious and unexpected opportunity, which placed an undisturbed and long-desired *tête-à-tête* within his grasp; while his fair companion exhibited a greater proportion of gravity than he had ever before seen either her countenance or manner express.

A silence, appalling to the timid lover, remained, however, unbroken, and likely to continue so, from the abstracted air of his lovely friend, and the consciousness of his own awkwardness: at length desperation lent him courage—he ventured to congratulate himself upon his present happiness, and then proceeded to state his hopes, his wishes, and his fears.

Florence was this morning even seriously inclined; she regarded the varying complexion, the embarrassed manner, the faltering voice of her diffident companion, as indications of real attachment. The recent circumstance



cumstance with respect to lady Fitz-Arnold, had given a momentary check to her accustomed flow of vivaciousness; and, for the first time in her life, she treated the professions of love and marriage with that serious attention which such subjects, she had often been told, should command. Mr. Elliot had no cause to complain of that trifling which had heretofore marked her conduct upon similar occasions; but with bitterest regret he received the conviction, that neither the heart nor hand he sought were at all likely to confirm and reward his truly disinterested affection.

The emotion with which this declaration was received deeply interested the beautiful object of it, who, momentarily yielding to the more amiable feelings of her disposition, in softest tones of commiseration attempted soothing him into a resignation of his hopes, when the bell of lady Fitz-Arnold having summoned her waiting-woman, she now entered with an invitation from her lady to Miss Vincent. The latter,

no way loth to quit her present embarrassing and painful situation, instantly rose, and slightly apologizing, quitted the room; nor was long in being ushered into that of the invalid, who exhibited strong appearance of continued, or rather increased illness.

She was seated in an easy-chair, on the arm of which rested her head; a bottle of *eau-de-luce* was retained in her hand; while her pallid cheeks and swollen eyes bore proof of mental anguish, as, extending her hand, she faintly articulated—"Welcome, dear Florence! this early visit indicates an interest both flattering and unexpected; for I feared you might have forgotten my wish to see you this morning."

"And yet, my dear madam, you never for an instant forgot me, when I was ill," replied Florence, in a tone of tender reproach.

"You have a grateful, an affectionate heart, my love," returned lady Fitz-Arnold. "Ah! it is when these predominate, and your features assume that soft and pensive interest,

interest, that your countenance so often reminds me of my lost Marianne! and it is from this cause that I never beheld the likeness so perfect as last night! You have never, Florence, heard me speak of my children; yet, if I had been represented to you as a doating mother, and a disconsolate widow, there would have been truth in the intelligence. But a daughter yet might have been spared me, had not a mother's ambition, a mother's prejudices destroyed her—”

The voice of lady Fitz-Arnold became suffocated—a pause ensued, and then, without further prelude, she suddenly commenced a little history of the past, as, drawing Florence nearer to her, she retained one of her hands within her own; but her auditor was even then obliged to lend an almost pained attention, to catch the words that fell from the lips of the aged narrator; for agitation and deepest anguish had contributed, with illness, to render her voice low and imperfect.

“ Born to a handsome inheritance, and  
of

of respectable family, my education and accomplishments were superintended by a woman of integrity, who acted as governess to my sister and myself; but at an early age I quitted her controul, and became the happy wife of sir James Fitz-Arnold.

“As our union was founded upon mutual affection, it proved such as might have been reasonably expected—we were fondly devoted to each other; for I sincerely loved my husband, and he far, very far, over-rated my merits; for to my opinion he invariably looked, on my judgment he relied, and from my decisions there was no appeal! oh, fatal proof of blind attachment!”

Lady Fitz-Arnold paused from inability to proceed; she wiped the tears from her cheeks, made an effort to recover composure, and resumed the thread of her narrative.

“Four years beheld us the parents of two promising children: the boy was the idol of my soul—the proud boast of a vain mother. His disposition, soft and gentle as the  
dove,

dove, was equally galleſs ; his ſiſter was, perhaps from a ſenſe of juſtice, more immediately the favourite of her father ; for he could not but ſee that, perhaps even unintentionally, I was yet more attached to my ſon. Time glided ſmoothly on its axis, and ſeventeen years rolled on in undiſturbed ſerenity ; the mind of Marianne was cultured, her perſon was elegant, and her diſpoſition perfectly amiable, if we except an irritability at controul, and a kind of proud acquieſcence in whatever conſequences might ariſe to herſelf, from ſelf-impoſed ſubmiſſion.

“ Vain of her pretenſions, I looked forward to a matrimonial connexion which ſhould place her in a ſtation I conceived her born to adorn ; yet ſhe appeared unconſcious of her own charms, and often expatiating with inherent ardour on domeſtic happineſs drawn from domeſtic ſources, ſeemed to reſt but little on thoſe advantages which to me were of ſuch magnitude. She had many admirers, many profeſſed lovers, but early diſtinguiſhed with marked preference,  
the

the young Edward Leslie, the son of a clergyman possessing but a very moderate income. Alarmed at the bare possibility of a future connection, I repulsed his advances towards intimacy in our house with imperious coldness, and not unfrequently entertained him with the plans formed by sir James and myself for our children. At such moments I regarded, with inquisitorial earnestness, the countenance of Leslie; it was ever, on such investigation, marked with despondence and anguish; but I was satisfied ambition alone had influenced the preference he had manifested, and I was gratified by discovering, by their effects, that my hints were acknowledged.

“ The mind of Marianne, however, appeared not so susceptible of conviction, and with pain I beheld the inroads of Love’s destructive path; her father viewed them with complacent eye, for the happiness of his girl secured his own; the family of Leslie was respectable, and his personal merits none disputed.

“ Our



“ Our son was still at the University, and in his absence his sister gained my undivided attention. I endeavoured to direct her’s to such objects as suited my views of aggrandizement for her; but I found her listless in the cause of ambition; she had sketched out her own plan of happiness, and she hoped to render me a convert to her sentiments; of her father’s approval she was sanguine, for he looked alone for those requisites which were, at that period, conspicuous in her Edward. Credulity was a marked feature of her character; I assailed her there. I painted my doubts of the *reality* of his affection; I placed before her the advantages that would accrue to Leslie from an union with her, and I eventually staggered her belief, whether he had not, in fact, been wholly governed by mercenary motives.

“ My poor girl was shocked, when suspicions of such motives first were introduced to her mind; she ruminated upon the possibility, until the probability had gained considerable ascendancy. I saw the advantage  
I had

I had gained, and I pursued it—But here suffer me to do myself justice—what I insinuated, I believe; and though I readily acknowledge it was now the first wish of my heart to cancel the bond of affection I conceived he held on her, yet, under other circumstances, such as worldly rank and advantages, if Leslie had possessed them, there was no being I would have preferred for a son-in-law. He was now, however, viewed with jaundiced eyes; each word, each look, each action, were perverted by prejudice; and, as far as I could, I influenced the mind of my daughter. But truth, at some period, will ever find its level. The film of suspicion was eventually dissolved by the radiance of her lucid rays; and, conscious of having injured him, time, and a further insight into his character, united to render all the atonement to his merits he so well deserved; and she became, from this circumstance, even more attached to him than she would possibly have otherwise been.

“With renewed grief I beheld this change

in Marianne ; but, as my own sentiments remained unaltered, as a dernier resort, I appealed to my husband, well knowing that it had never yet been in vain. He was, as usual, swayed by my arguments, decided by my opinion : Edward Leslie was forbidden the house, and our daughter was required, on her obedience, to renounce all further intercourse with him—to forget him altogether. Heart-breaking as was this injunction, she complied with all to which her ability extended ; Edward Leslie was no more her visitor—but Edward Leslie had found a sanctuary within her bosom ! She felt we had exercised a power beyond the confines of justice, she submitted to its influence, and she became its victim.

“ In a few months the health of my child was evidently on the decline. Her vivacity, that elasticity of spirits she had so eminently possessed, had vanished ;—Consumption’s meagre form succeeded to those lovely rounded limbs, once so much the subject of admiration—I must be brief—Its progress

was

was rapid; the bed of sickness soon followed, from which she never again rose.

“In the interim, Leslie had quitted England, to which he was at this period recalled by a series of unexpected events; death had swept away successive inheritants, and the late indigent Edward was hailed as the next heir to title and fortune. With anxious haste the poor wanderer sought his martyred love; he found her on the bed of death—for she expired in his arms! his frantic grief, the burst of long-stifled affection, convinced even me of the sincerity of his professions; but the conviction came too late. The calls of ambition superseded the ties of maternal love, and domestic peace was buried in its ruins! When my poor victim was removed to her last abode, the picture of Leslie, drawn from memory by herself, was discovered suspended at her bosom;—that picture you have seen—it is ever near me, and preserved by me as a memento of my crime.

“Our son now quitted college to become

once more a part of our family. He was all our fondest hopes could paint; and sought, by every means in his power, to mitigate that affliction into which we were plunged: but where is the medicine that can effectually be administered to silence self-reproach? The efforts of my boy were useless, and his own spirits caught the contagion. We had recourse to the gaieties of the metropolis—they palled upon the senses; the different watering-places succeeded—but with no better effect; and we returned again into the country, listless and miserable as when we had left it. George had formed at Oxford a strong friendship with a fellow-student, who now joined our domestic party; and to this auxiliary I was indebted for that partial restoration to peace, which is all I have ever known. His good sense, his universal knowledge, his well-tempered vivacity, his extensive reading, were never-failing sources of delight; and we soon became all as united as if the closest bonds of affinity had formed the cement.

“ This

“This young man was the youngest son of a large family, and it was a matter of convenience, when they acceded to our wishes that he should continue our welcome guest. His education had been at the expence of a godfather, whose procrastinated intentions of providing for him had been altogether set aside by his own sudden death, and his *protégée* was consequently left entirely destitute. This early friendship of the two young men grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength; for they were united by mutual virtue, mutual esteem. Three years glided smoothly on with them; and both sir James and myself regarded him as a second son.

“At this period we became acquainted with a family of great respectability, of the name of Hansard, the father of which had been recently appointed to the rectory of a neighbouring church. They had many children, but the eldest daughter, Catherine, now about eighteen, was an object of uncommon attraction; and, with unspeak-



able delight, I thought I discovered towards her a growing attachment in my son, for she was altogether the very woman I would have selected for him, if the world had been at my command; his father was equally gratified; and we once more looked forward with hope to the future.

“The lapse of a few months, however, discovered our error: both of our young men had entered the army; two vacancies in one regiment had enabled sir James Fitz-Arnold to place them together, and the period now approached when it became necessary that they should join. We had observed the spirits of our son had been within a few days severely oppressed, but naturally imputed the cause to the near separation which he anticipated with the amiable Catherine; but his fond father, anxious to remove every uneasy fear from his mind, sought an opportunity to offer unsolicited his entire approbation of the election we doubted not he had made. Great, however, was his astonishment, when it was received with painful surprise,

surprise, with suppressed grief, and strongest emotion. He entreated that nothing more might be said upon the subject, when he could command his agitation sufficiently to give words to his feelings; and more particularly that not a syllable might be breathed of it to his friend.

“A few days, however, elucidated the mystery, by the declaration of this dear and valued friend; who, unconscious of the misery attendant upon the discovery, confessed a mutual, but imprudent attachment between himself and our favourite Catherine. Her father had refused acquiescence in their wishes—he had nothing to bestow upon his daughter, and the pay of an ensign could not certainly provide for a family; he, however, did not bar their union; but as an incumbent duty he had denied consent, and advised a separation. The contest between love and prudence terminated as may naturally be supposed, and the inconsiderate pair were married.

“Ambition was dead in my bosom. I

had, in the interim, become the confidant of my unfortunate son, who, ignorant of the attachment of his friend, had himself become devoted to the lovely Catherine; but no sooner had he learnt the wishes of Elliot, than he nobly struggled with his own feelings, and left him in happy ignorance of the sacrifice. He did more; he bestowed a part of his annual income upon the new-married couple, and prevailed upon his father to add a hundred per annum to it. The delicate scruples of Elliot were conquered, and he consented to the arrangement of his friend.

“Of the principles of George I felt secure; but I was not equally so with regard to his happiness. The attractions of Catherine were such as not to be easily effaced; her virtues were of superior mould, and time promised to add to, rather than diminish, her influence over his mind. The time, however, arrived, when we were to be separated, and they left us to join the regiment. Twelve tedious months elapsed ere  
we

we again met; they were now under orders for foreign service, and we were summoned to Ireland, where they had been stationed, for the painful purpose of bidding them adieu! The poor Catherine expected soon to become a mother; but no representation of danger or hardship could deter her from accompanying her husband: they embarked together, and we returned to our deserted home!—Excuse me, dear Florence, but I must hurry over the sequel.

“ The field of battle soon filled up the measure of our woe. My poor George was discovered by his faithful friend in a situation of imminent danger; he was beset by unequal numbers, and in a few moments would have been sacrificed to the fury of the enemy—Elliot darted like an arrow through the ranks—he effected his purpose—but, ah! at what an expence! he was carried to his tent mortally wounded! he survived but to embrace his Catherine, to recommend her and his unborn infant to my son, ere he expired in his arms. The pangs

of childbirth seized the wretched wife— suffice it to say, that in two months after we received our broken-hearted son, and his precious orphan, beneath our desolate roof! Grief and disappointment had made dreadful progress in his youthful frame; they were not only rapid in advance, but they were sure in effect. My darling son, the idol of my soul, the fond prop of his father's last hope, the pride of his existence, fell a victim to their united force."

The voice of lady Fitz-Arnold became indistinct; her frame trembled with emotion, her hand grasped that of her tearful auditor, her head sunk upon her shoulder.

All the softer feelings of Florence were called into action; she soothed with truest commiseration, where she could not altogether approve. But, surely, if ambition had smothered the tender flame of maternal affection, the sacrifice had been great—the atonement a life of suffering!

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## CHAP. XI.

By Time's slow heaving tide, the works of man  
 Are whelm'd; how smiles beneath his wasteful sway  
 The pride of empire! glittering for awhile,  
 The gilded vessels sport along the stream,  
 Fann'd with propitious gales; the sides are firm,  
 The hull capacious, and the swelling sails  
 Float to the breeze of summer. Ah! how soon,  
 Torn by the tempest's widely-rushing wing,  
 And foundering on the deep, it lies deform'd,  
 A shatter'd wreck! nor less on life descends  
 The storm impetuous: let thy silver hairs,  
 Time-hallow'd age, be witness! the dim eye,  
 The tottering tread, the furrow'd cheek, the hand  
 Yet trembling from the blast.

DR. OSILVIE.

### *The Marriage Promise.*

SUCH was the disastrous family detail of lady  
 Fitz-Arnold, in whom, if the more destruc-



tive errors of ungoverned pride had encountered a retributive chastisement, that checked their further extension, still all the foibles of that original germ of character yet remained: and thus in life we ever find it, that although the principal traits of disposition in early youth may be pruned, altered, and amended by education, time, and event, and its rougher outline softened, yet to the microscopic eye of penetrative observation, there will ever, even in trivial circumstances, be visible some vestiges of former propensities, however reason and experience may have hurled them from supremacy in momentous actions, or curb their violence.

Many years had intervened since her ladyship had beheld the once-devoted but then indigent lover, of her lost and deeply-mourned daughter, the present eccentric earl of Trelawney; nor was it singular that no meeting had occurred, since both parties were mutually anxious to avoid a rencounter. The effect of the present interview

was, therefore, doubly severe on the unhappy self-condemned mother, since such advanced age seldom recovers a shock of extreme mental torture, when barbed with the arrow of remorse. The declining frame of the wretched heart-broken parent was now indeed bowed to the very borders of the grave; and the final blow was rendered decisive, in beholding the anguish of Elliot, her sole remaining tie on earth, as he avowed the hopeless nature of his long attachment; for the unfortunate lady Fitz-Arnold recalled to memory, with anguished feelings, the too-fatal proofs she had in her own family witnessed, of the dire effects of despondent affection, and anticipated with horror a similar fate, in the disastrous lot of this deserving but unhappy youth.

Once more, when on the bed of illness and misery, lady Fitz-Arnold sought a private interview with Florence; and, while struggling nature seemed to wrest speech from the frozen grasp of death, she pled the cause of her adopted son, he who had been

the only solace and support of her childless widowed years.

Melancholy and awfully impressive was now the sad spectacle presented to our heroine, and her hand trembled with emotion as it was grasped by that of lady Fitz-Arnold. The cold dew of death rested on her furrowed brow, and her emaciated frame was shaken by those dread convulsions which spoke the parting struggle of that soul, which yet gave tone to those words that breathed a mother's deepest interest in the fate of him she had so long viewed as an only son, by circumstance endeared to peculiar affection. This effort, however, but spent the remaining strength of her mortal frame; while Florence was borne away by the sudden rush of spontaneous feeling for the supplicating, aged, dying sufferer. Reason, as was usual with her, remained inactive, in that serious and prudential consideration which should have attended the forming of a sacred and irrevocable engagement, such as the intreaties,

the

the prayers, and the wishes of lady Fitz-Arnold now sought to secure; and, wholly actuated by that burst of sensibility which at times preponderated over every other trait of her disposition, the agitated and weeping girl threw herself at the side of the bed where lay the dying and eloquent pleader; she pressed her cold hand with energy to her warmly-beating heart; her lips moved—the promise, the fatally-required promise rose thereon!—she paused—for a sudden convulsion of the hand she held alarmed the weakened timid nerves of one unaccustomed to scenes of death and woe! the rattles sounded on her ear! appalled, though unconscious of what it portended, and that it was the certain harbinger of life's final close, she shrieked for help! that help mortal power could not now bestow, and her head sunk upon the bed: for although sense did not forsake her, she failed in that presence of mind, and firmness of resolution, which alone could enable her to be active in those exertions her feelings would have

have prompted her to have bestowed, since the naturally fine mind of Florence had been enervated, enfeebled, and debilitated, by the follies and foibles of a too-fashionable mother.

At the customary period the will of lady Fitz-Arnold was opened, and a sealed letter, directed to Mr. Vincent, was forwarded to him, apparently written some weeks previous, although destitute of date. It reminded him of the engagement he had voluntarily entered into, and which had, in fact, caused his journey to the metropolis, namely, that they should mutually influence her adopted son, and his daughter, to a matrimonial alliance; that on her part there had been no necessity for enforcing this wish, by the annexed condition, for the heart of Elliot had been long devoted where her wishes had pointed; it therefore now only rested with him to render Florence sensible of her own interest in every sense, by bestowing her hand, where reason, prudence, and conviction of personal merit, would ensure



ensure future happiness, by becoming the wife of Elliot; and, satisfied that parental counsel, united with mature deliberation, would eventually prove victorious over youthful caprice and coquettish folly, she had new-organized her will, and bequeathed the whole of her large possessions to Elliot, convinced that he would render her, whom she considered as his bride-elect, as independant as his generous soul would dictate, and rather wishing it should be conveyed to her through that channel, which should secure to him her gratitude, a passion by no means dormant, she well knew, in the breast of Florence.

The rhetoric of Mr. Vincent was now indeed exerted with all the earnestness and eloquence of parental authority, parental intreaty, and parental remonstrance; but inefficacious was the sum of all! nor can we, in this instance, condemn the conduct of our otherwise too-often erring heroine; for mercenary motive could alone have been the cement of her bond of faith, if plighted  
to



to Elliot, since lady Fitz Arnold was now removed far from a scene where worldly event could mar or secure her peace, and her death had rescued Florence from the utterance of that fatal promise, which, in another moment, would for ever have sealed her destiny, as connected with the adopted son of her aged friend.

Attached to lady Fitz-Arnold by an affection which had arisen from the grateful remembrance of attentions in her childish years, at that period when maternal neglect had rendered them the more impressive, Florence retained a saddened regret for the sorrows of her eventful life; and partial regard softened, if it did not wholly obliterate, the darkened shades of her ladyship's character.

The dissolution of this unfortunate woman, although an event to be naturally expected at her very advanced age, had yet borne much of the awfulness of sudden death in its final arrival; and never had the tears of any mourners been more sincere,  
than

than those which flowed on the present occasion from her youthful favourites. The total exclusion of herself from the property of her aunt, in consequence of her refusal of Elliot, as expressly stipulated in the will, caused not a single pang of regret to the bosom of Miss Vincent; not even a thought rested on the circumstance.

Accustomed to all the luxuries of life, and never having known the miseries of penury, not even the slightest inconvenience from a wish her purse could gratify, she regarded the indulgences of fortune as a matter of course: nor could she readily credit the tale of her father, when it predicted future poverty to herself, while she beheld throughout their establishment nought but affluence and profusion. Prudence and reflection were not the delegated virtues of poor Florence; and too vain not to be self-opiniated, she had embraced a firm persuasion that her father had his motives for the gloomy representation of the phantom Adversity stalking toward them; and having

once

once imbibed an impression, however rash and inconsiderate, our heroine fancied all confirmed its truth and justice; so loth was she to believe her own judgment erroneous.

The disappointed rejected lover was too diffident for persevering assiduity, and not only quitted the immediate spot where alone the scene of attractions with him reigned, but actually resolved on embarking for another quarter of the globe; and taking advantage of the extensive interest of a friend in the India department, he obtained from him a civil situation, more honorary than profitable, on that distant shore; and ere the remains of his revered and respected friend had been deposited one month in the grave, he bade a long, a last adieu to England's isle, and all that for him it contained most dear.

Scarcely had Elliot received his final dismissal, than our heroine was disturbed, and we must confess even seriously affected, by a report that major Bentinck had suddenly transferred, if not his affections, at least his  
attentions,

attentions, to Miss Bertie. His regiment had, within the last six weeks, been removed from Litchfield to the island of Guernsey; and a gentleman just arrived from that place, to whom she was accidentally introduced by a friend in town, had avowed it to be the accredited report of their more immediate military circle in that quarter, that something more serious than mere flirtation was on the tapis; while appearance had, to him, afforded full confirmation. A letter, about the same time received from Ellen, was deemed by Florence a further corroboration of the correctness of this communication; since, whether from fancy or reality, she considered the style as teeming with embarrassment and constraint; and there was more than one equivocal passage, to which jealousy, as usual, gave her own interpretation; and had the matter been, as actually represented, there certainly was no rational ground to condemn or arraign Miss Bertie; for if Florence had herself voluntarily rejected a de-  
voted

voted lover, she certainly could retain no right to upbraid her friend for not pursuing the same conduct. But we have the history of a sad unreasonable heroine to detail, and we must, in very truth, admit that the letter of Ellen was instantly consigned to the flames; while throughout the day Miss Vincent indulged in passionate resentment against both her friend and her *ci-devant* lover, whose conduct she did not hesitate to condemn, as culpable, cruel, and ungenerous! but resolved, at the same time, to write the former immediately, and treat the subject with all the *badinage* and vivacity possible; and this from a motive not so very enigmatical, but that we may leave it to be solved by every woman who has turned indignant from the transfer of a lover's heart.

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 CHAP. XII.

One part, one little part, we dimly scan,  
Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream.

BEATTIE.

.....  
What is she whose griefs

Bear such an emphasis?

SHAKESPEARE.

*The Ring, or the deserted Bride.*

It was very early in the morning, at least an hour so unfashionably early as to preclude the probability of visitors, as Mrs. Maitland sat over the breakfast-table; the meal had been long completed, but, lost in thought, the inscrutable Henrietta seemed unconscious that it was so, for the urn yet remained before her, with all its appendages.

Misery,



Misery, acute, corroding misery, was legible on her countenance, as her head rested on the hand of that arm which the table supported; tears gushed from those eyes, whose fire they could not extinguish; unheeded they rolled down her cheeks, and, in her present sitting attitude, nought but exquisite beauty met the observer's view; for a large Spanish shawl enveloped the deformity of her figure.

“Philip!” she uttered in a tone of inward horror, mingled with a strange and inexplicable expression; “Philip, thou art dead! and yet I gained the bond—ah! why does anguish now pursue me, for is not all accomplished? I thought to have thrown misery from me—I have hurled it on those around—but no; it yet clings here; it grasps my very soul, it festers in my heart! the fiend will not quit its hold; like the prolific spreading tree, whose branches expanding far and wide, yet it firmly maintains its pristine root. Life, wretched, miserable life! I would end thee even now, but that  
my

my death would diffuse joy over the breast of another, on one whose sufferings are my glory; and to implant torture in whose bosom, I would sustain a double, nay, a treble portion in my own !”

The tears hung suspended on the cheeks of Henrietta, as thus she half soliloquized ; her eyes flashed a wild, a dreadful lumination ! a dew sat on her forehead, and her lips were pallid, as by the appalling internal complexion of her own reflections, as with livid hue they quivered, while some fainter sound moved thereon.

The approach of footsteps, succeeded by a servant turning the lock of the door, caused her precipitately to start from her seat, and immediately quitting the room by another outlet, she was soon secreted from observation, within the precincts of her own chamber.

Half an hour after, a female domestic sought admission, to inform her that a young lady had requested permission to wait on her, professing herself to be her countrywoman,

countrywoman, and of a family not unknown to Mrs. Maitland. Henrietta mused upon the circumstance—a Portuguese not unknown to her, and in Ireland—a petitioner too; who could the visitor be? Curiosity, if no better motive, conquered; and she was requested to ascend the stairs.

With no inconsiderable degree of embarrassment, the modest Agnes was ushered into the presence of her to whom she appealed; while she was conscious she could bring no credentials to confirm her assertion of near consanguinity to a former friend, and that she had no other support to rest upon, than the unvarnished truth of her tale; but the timid relater essayed to rally all the powers of fortitude and courage she possessed, to give a clear and collected account of her relative and herself.

The manner of Henrietta did not repel; it was divested of that imperious insolence, which is but too often exercised to distance the unfortunate, or of that thoughtless and careless disregard, which seems to consider  
the

the petition of the distressed as a tax upon attention, which cannot be too soon evaded; her eyes were half averted, as if from a wish to relieve that confusion which was so evident in the stranger; yet was her whole attention evidently bent, and with no common interest, to that detail to which she listened from the low and tremulous voice of the narrator: the countenance, however, of the auditor varied even more than that of the speaker, and an expression of peculiar tendency seemed to pervade her features, which a fluctuating colour sometimes flushed, and then left even paler than before! Agnes at length ceased; her little memoir was complete, and she had nought else to offer on her own behalf.

Mrs. Maitland was yet silent; those eyes hitherto half-averted were now fixed with stern inquisitive interrogatory, and a sort of even haughty defiance, on the countenance of the intimidated Agnes—"Madam, your tale bears to me the colouring of truth; it is also corroborated by the letter

you allude to from your aunt, which reached me in safety. But matter then of greater import engrossed me wholly, and, consequently, intervened between my wishes and ability to seek and befriend you, as I would otherwise have done. But what you offer is not all I require: you make no mention of any *proof* of your identity, which I have waited in the expectation of your offering; if you are her you profess yourself to be, surely you can be at no loss to understand my allusion?"

The face of Agnes was suffused with crimson; to be thus doubted was indeed a humiliating occurrence; and yet a moment's reflection banished the resentment which had arisen at the hinted surmise—"No, madam, I have no document to support my assertion—I am even ignorant to what you allude."

"Did Mrs. Dursley then expire without bequeathing to your care *a ring*? without even the mention of one in her possession, of peculiar form, of size more than common magnitude,

magnitude, with two circulars of gold, and plain hair inclosed in an octagon centre?"

Agnes thoughtfully paused—her countenance suddenly brightened—"A ring, madam, of this description, was undoubtedly taken from a small cabinet by my aunt, and placed upon my finger, even at the moment which immediately preceded her dissolution. She attempted to convey with it some sentence, I have reason to believe she conceived of consequence to be heard by me, from an anxiety to render it articulate; but the ability was denied her, and the imperfect tones of her voice did not allow me to form even an idea of the nature of the intended communication. Your perfect knowledge, however, of that ring, together with its having been placed upon my finger immediately after the delivery of the letter addressed to you, leads to the conclusion, that it was intended to accompany it; and, in pursuance of that impression, I feel gratified in still further obeying the implied wishes of my lamented aunt, by re-



signing it to your possession; and my ability to do so will, I presume, be the desired proof of my being the individual whom I have represented myself. My treasures," she added, as the tears rushed to her eyes, "are now but few; and this, of comparatively small value as I believed, has always been committed to my pocket, rather as a memento of her I loved, than from any other cause," and as she spoke she presented the ring.

The eager hand of Henrietta grasped it, her eyes surveyed it with eagerness; she touched a secret-spring, the enclosure with the hair flew open, and she gazed upon somewhat within, with a wild and fearful expression from her fine and beautiful eyes. She closed it abruptly, upon the discovery that she was regarded with inquisitive observation by Agnes; and placing it upon a table, she drew her chair nearer to that of her visitor, whose hand she pressed within her own—"All doubt, dear Agnes, has vanished; forgive me that I ever entertained  
any;

any; but it was of moment that I should be perfectly ascertained of your real pretensions to those claims I now most freely accord you. In early youth I was placed beneath the same roof with our deceased friend; she was nearly of my own age, and I regarded her, at that period, in the light of a tender and affectionate sister: our attachment strengthened as we increased in years; and what commenced in infancy was cemented by time and intimate association. She was all that was fond and kind to me, and we were happy, till the scorpion Love stole in, and poisoned all our bliss!"

Henrietta started from her seat: the hand of Agnes, which she had the moment before grasped with almost convulsive strength, was now dashed from her with violence; each lovely feature became distorted by mental agony; each limb shook as if palsied; remembrance seemed to have been endowed with the fabled powers of magic, so complete and instantaneous was its effect

upon the frame of the incomprehensible Henrietta!

Agnes gazed in fearful apprehension; at one moment she doubted the sanity of the agonized sufferer, at the next she almost wished the surmise real.

“I have alarmed you, Agnes,” returned the mysterious wife, when time had again restored her to more composure; “recollect, if you would remain with me, you must prepare to sustain these scenes; they are frequent—they are irrepressible; for feelings warm, violent, and unbending as mine, will have vent, or my reason would fatally suffer! these paroxysms relieve its tortures. Fear me not, however, as a wild unsettled maniac,” she added, while a smile moved her now ghastly and despondent features, without its natural effect of pleasurable illumination to the countenance: “and if reason has not guided my actions through the last few years of my life, still *I am not mad!* You have represented yourself to  
me

me as a friendless being, overwhelmed with poverty and misfortune; but the former you now shall never again acknowledge whilst I exist, and from my own independent fortune I can remove each lesser sorrow. Beneath this roof you will find an asylum; for here," added Henrietta, with a strangely-varied expression of countenance, "her I am mistress, despotic mistress! my house, my purse, my heart, shall all be open to the adopted child of my early friend; and I will view you but as a younger sister, as your fond relation once did me; and all I ask is but to keep secret from public observation the wild anguish that pursues me in my hours of privacy. Pass no comment on my words, nor yet my actions; be silent on all, and accept me for a firm and steadfast friend."

## CHAP. XIII.

" Fate steals along with silent tread,  
 Found oft'nest in what least we dread,  
 Frowns in the storm with angry brow,  
 But in the sunshine strikes the blow."

*A Variation of Scenery.*

RESPECT to the memory of lady Fitz-Arnold confined our heroine, for some little time, to retirement, after the death of this near relation. The melancholy scene of mortality she had witnessed, had severely depressed her spirits, and discontent had been the companion of her bosom, since the final dismissal of Horace Bentinck; for if the voice of flattery from novel admirers did, at times, cause vanity to triumph over love, still,

still, when the adulation could not reach her ear, and the dullness of a solitary hour succeeded, she could not forget how far more pleasing had been the minutes which had followed the absence of Horace, when thought was wont to indulge on the evident attachment of this favourite lover.

The letter of vivacious temperament had been dispatched to Miss Bertie, under the first influence of indignant resentment; but reflection did, in after moments, essay to represent where the real culprit existed: still self-accusation was more than the philosophy of Florence could support; and, marshalling all her remaining spirits to the field, she once more moved abroad, with folly at her wonted standard.

Amid the many male admirers, more, at this period, were the trifling flirts of the hour, than serious professors; but Miss Vincent felt her attention always most arrested by lord Leslie; and his sudden presence had often checked the volatile laugh, or raised a blush on the cheek of this presumptuous  
L 5 beauty.



beauty. She read in those eyes, too naturally intelligent for disguise, the alteration of his sentiments towards her ; it was not contempt, it was not the indignation of resentment, as solely connected with her individual conduct to his friend, but it was a kind of mellowed pity, and pained sorrow, at his own misconception of her character, its failure of all that he had hoped and believed it, that humiliating and depressing her generally but too-arrogant mind, had more salutary effect, than all the remonstrances of parental interest and authority from Mr. Vincent, or even all that the passionate vehemence of the disappointed Bentinck could have produced by a thousand expostulations. Her heart had been too much trifled away by coquetry, to evince for Horace that fervent love, which converts its object into an idol : she was, consequently, not blinded to the errors of his character, and conceived his imperfections of disposition, by sanctioning her own, deprived him of the right too severely to arraign,

arraign her's, since he was unable to correct his own foibles : but with Leslie, the more she beheld of him, the higher her estimation arose ; and although she viewed him as too far her superior in every excellence, for her erring heart to associate with his in the tenderest, nearest bonds of love, yet she could not support the idea, that he should class her as an inferior among women. That coquetry which had been her never-failing auxiliary in securing the attentions and devotion of other men, she had not courage to attempt with him ; or if she had, at times, leaned towards this anchor of attraction, the smile that rose on his features could be playfully courteous to general observation ; yet could Florence read in it but the confirmation of her folly, and turn from the fruitless attempt, displeased with herself, but never with him.

Miss Vincent had remarked, that since her late dismissal of the addresses of Elliot, her father, contrary to his usual habits on similar occasions, had appeared gloomy and  
unhappy,

some new music, which had just been sent pursuant to the order of Miss Vincent.

Sober thought vanished, as she looked over the collection, and selecting the playful ballad, "*If you please I had rather not,*" she placed it upon the music-stand, and seating herself at the harp, began its accompaniment with vivacious air.

While thus engaged, Mr. Vincent returned home, and entered the room where his daughter was indulging her musical inclination. As he approached her, the gloomy cloud which had for some days invariably hung on his brow, subsided; an expression of compassion, even of distress, gradually succeeded—"Cease this light and thoughtless strain, dear Florence; my mind is ill attuned to chearful notes. I am not well; cross events in the city disturb my repose, and some decisive step must be taken, to ward off consequences that threaten serious issue! One fortnight more, and I must brave—"

"What, my dear father? I am ready, very

very ready to quit London instantly, if either your wishes or your convenience demand it of me; why not then disclose to me now this secret source of uneasiness, which, whenever it appears, as at the present moment, puts to flight all my folly, my thoughtlessness, and conscious want of prudence? Embrace then, my dear sir, the passing hour; I will lend you my whole attention; and unfold to me the source of that anxiety I have, within the last few weeks, occasionally seen has assailed you."

"Not now, my child. I have exposed myself, from absence of mind, to the severity of cold, and a heavy rain, after considerable heat from excess of exercise, and now begin to feel the effect in indisposition. I will therefore retire to my chamber; and to-morrow, when, I trust, a restoration of health will permit, I will fully explain the cause of all."

The affrighted Florence was instantly in search of remedies to ward off the threatened danger; her own hands freed his neck  
of

some new music, which had just been sent pursuant to the order of Miss Vincent.

Sober thought vanished, as she looked over the collection, and selecting the playful ballad, "*If you please I had rather not,*" she placed it upon the music-stand, and seating herself at the harp, began its accompaniment with vivacious air.

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of its damp covering; a warm bed was prepared, in which he soon was placed; and persisting in being left alone, she reluctantly withdrew to the adjoining room, where she remained the night, listening, at intervals, in much apprehension, while at others she congratulated herself on his profound repose. Once she softly unclosed the door—but all was still; she approached the bed—silence yet prevailed; he moved not—spoke not; again she returned to the drawing-room, satisfied with the serene sleep he apparently enjoyed, although anxiety with her kept the vigils of the night.

The day dawned, time crept on, yet the expected summons reached not her ear. The breakfast-hour drew near; she became alarmed with awakened apprehension. Once more she sought his room—again she opened the curtains, and with horror gazed on the altered features of her father! his florid complexion had acquired the empurpled hue of apoplexy—he lay extended on his bed, a breathless corse!

Assistance

Assistance was in vain summoned ; for soon had the distracted girl the assurance, that life was extinguished, and hope annihilated !

\* \* \* \* \*

To paint the effects of such a scene upon the mind of our heroine, I neither could attempt, or doing so, could pourtray what was really felt by the afflicted mourner :—true it is, that at no period of her life had this parent nurtured the affections of his offspring, or sought to attach to himself any share of that sensibility which was still a prominent trait in the heart of Florence. But although certainly not as tenderly devoted to him as, under other circumstances, she doubtless would have been, yet the awful manner of his bereavement, and the many indulgences she had received at his hands, united to affect her most sensibly ; and she was conveyed to her chamber, in apparently as lifeless a situation as him from whose arms she had been forcibly torn.

The forlorn orphan had many days realized

alized that distinction, when she received a visit from the woman of whom the house she inhabited had been hired; her entrance was abrupt—her manner not less so; with cruel precision she stated the necessity of a removal of the deceased by night, to avoid an arrest of the body! she talked of an execution in the house, of her just demands, of the carriage and horses, which had already been seized to satisfy her claims, and of her own humanity, in having suffered a decent time to elapse, ere she hinted at the necessity for measures being adopted to secure respect to the remains of the insolvent Mr. Vincent, from his more obdurate creditors, who threatened to carry that power the law admitted under such circumstances to its full extent.

The petrified Florence scarcely breathed! she heard in silence the dreadful tale; and when finished, was unable to command articulation. This pitiable state of stunned faculty was misinterpreted by Mrs. Davis, who beheld in it only an acquiescence in her

her

her measures; and, therefore, proceeded to inform her, that every legal step, with regard to her father's property, had already been taken by the creditors; and that unless she possessed an independant fortune, she had no longer any claim upon that of the deceased, as it would, at best, be but a small portion for the numerous claimants. She then named the coming evening for the funeral obsequies; and granting her permission to remain a few days, left the room, careless and unconscious of the effects which might attend the appalling information she had communicated to the wretched mourner.

END OF VOL. II.

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*Lady's Monthly Museum, December 1808.*

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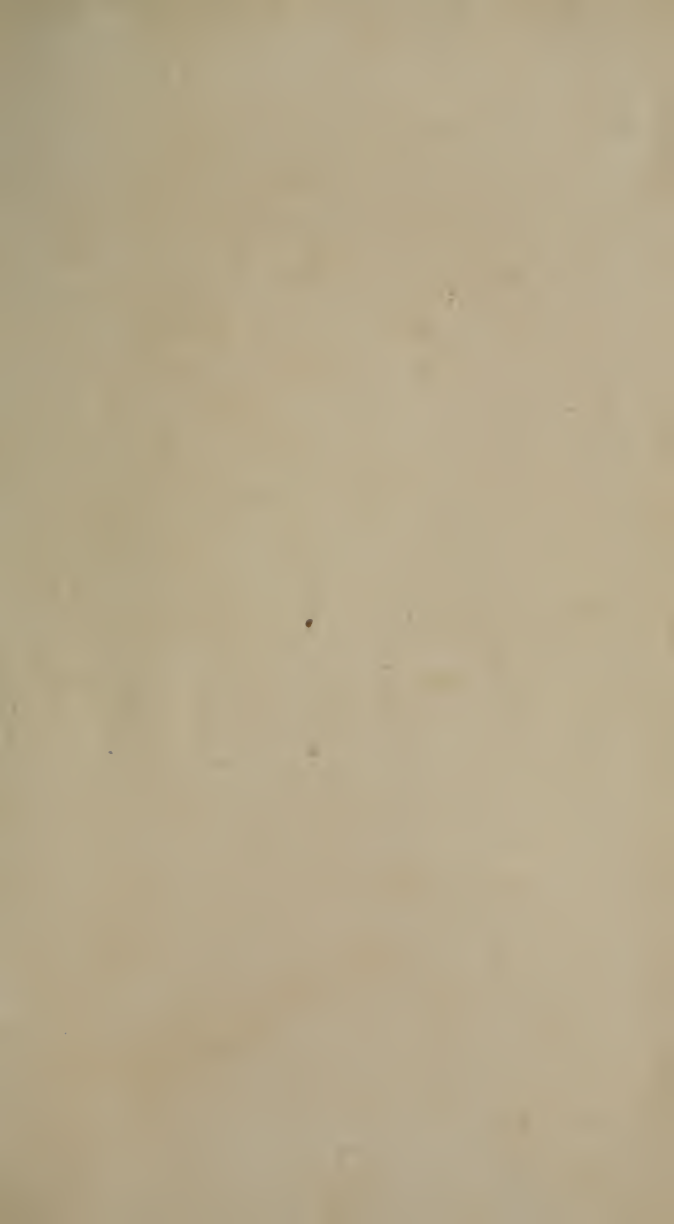
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*Monthly Review, Sep. 1809.*





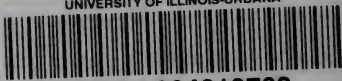








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